

VISION

Christmas 2022



To cure, sometimes; To help, often; To comfort, always.



Welcome!

A few words from **Valentina Zaharia-Smith**
President of Children in Distress Romania



The past few months have seen exciting developments with our work in Romania.

We celebrated the opening of Casa Maria, our wonderful new hospice for the children in our care in Bucharest. We were delighted to have our Patron, HRH Princess Maria of Romania, officially open the new home. We continued the celebration with a reception with the British Ambassador to Romania. You can read more about this in the following pages along with photographs of Princess Maria with our children. We have also acquired a property for **Pineview Retreat Lodge**, our planned integrative centre for children with special needs that'll be located in the mountains of Zarnesti. Elsewhere, we setup non-profits in Germany and the United States. It has been a very busy year!

So much has been accomplished since Children in Distress was established over three decades ago. Through those years we have provided loving care to approximately 20,000 children and young adults in our various programs.

The last few years have been challenging, with COVID's impact on our children and staff and financial burdens. We needed to make some changes to met new Romanian government standards for childcare, which led to the purchase and renovation of Casa Maria, allowing us to provide enhanced family-style care.

We could never have achieved all we have without your support nor weathered the recent difficulties. We are so grateful for all your help and for staying with us on this journey.

Thank you from **everyone** at Children in Distress.



Laurentiu moves into his new home, Casa Maria (far right).



Please join us to celebrate the relaunch of Children in Distress

Guest of Honour

HRH Princess Maria of Romania
– Royal Patron of Children in Distress –

MONDAY 6TH MARCH 2023
18:30 – 22:00

ROMANIAN EMBASSY
4 PALACE GREEN
LONDON
W8 4QD

RSVP BY 1ST MARCH 2023
EVENING SMART / COCKTAIL

HRH Princess Maria of Romania will give a speech on the *Future for Our Children*. Valentina Zaharia-Smith, CEO of Children in Distress Romania, will provide an update on CiD's projects and activities.

This will be followed by an Artistic Interlude with:
Nelly Miricioiu, Soprano
David Gowland, Pianist
Marius Iepure, Dancer

Buffet and refreshments will close the evening.

To reserve your place, please go to:
www.childrenindistress.org/royal-celebration

For more information phone our office on 0141 559 5690, or email:
lesleyann.connelly@childrenindistress.org.uk



Home Sweet Home



Above: Princess Maria opens Casa Maria. Opposite she meets Cristina, one of our own princesses.

On the occasion of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Children in Distress team celebrated the opening of Casa Maria, a new home that meets the highest standards of care.

From the first moment we thought of opening Casa Maria, we wanted a warm and bright house where our children could feel the love and peace of a family. And we did it.

The dedication was indeed a celebration. Her Royal Highness Princess Maria of Romania took part in the ribbon cutting along with many supporters, volunteers, and staff. Her patronage has been fundamental, because after many trials and tribulations, our children can finally feel at home.

The celebration continued at the residence of the British Ambassador, His Excellency Andrew Noble. The evening commenced with speeches from Mrs. Helen Noble, on behalf of His Excellency,

Valentina Paula Smith, head of Children in Distress Foundation, Simon Errington Co-Chair of CiD UK, Rev. Frauke Ackerman Chair of HikHer (the German charity set up for CiD's support) and Her Royal Highness Princess Maria of Romania.

The theme of the event was **Unity**. Together we can achieve many great things and Casa Maria is proof of that. While we sadly cannot help every child who needs us, we are committed to making sure that each child in our care has the best life possible that they can.

Our hope for the future is to transition from traditional orphanages to group homes where better care can be provided for all children in need.

Over the following pages you can see how our children have settled into their new home along with more photographs of the opening with Princess Maria.



Casa Maria offers us the opportunity to deliver our therapy and recovery sessions in a more pleasant and motivating environment.

From the first days spent in their new home, the children were looking forward to getting back into their normal activities.

With great curiosity, they were interested in the new home where they will continue their therapy, lessons, playgroups and physical therapy sessions.

Both for the CiD's specialists and for our children, this moment represented an opportunity to set new objectives regarding the development framework and the way to implement the activity in the new place.

Naturally, we started the sessions in Casa Maria by getting familiarised with the new environment, as well as the new structure of the sessions. The children quickly recognised the place had been specially designed for each individual activity.

The living room was the ideal location for our regular good morning circle activity and games. As in every home, it is the place in the house where the whole family gathers to spend time together.

Outside, we concentrated on fun with movement, balls and running, so that the children could feel at ease and can enjoy every moment spent in nature.

The new physical therapy room completely fascinated them with its design and equipment.

Although you did not manage to cross the threshold of our new house, we hope that these pictures and stories will bring you joy and the feeling of a real home felt by all of us in Casa Maria.



Stefan (opposite) and Andrei hard at work with volunteer Emilia, who helps with learning activities.



Cristiana takes a break in her lesson, while our children thank Maria, our School of Medicine volunteer.



Birthday Bonanza! Cristina and Andrei celebrating their special days.

Five of our children started the school year in their new home at Casa Maria. The process of adjusting went very well and the home schooling activities were resumed with their teacher.

Cristina, Andrei, Bubu, Stefan and Cristiana were delighted to see their teacher and proudly showed her their new house.

After this tour, the little ones were very eager to show the lady what new things they had learned during the vacation. Then, with great seriousness and interest, they resumed the school program working with numbers and letters, but they also enjoyed new educational games. Their teacher appreciated their effort and love for learning and congratulated them for the progress made so far. We too are very proud of them!

Summer was a good opportunity for

our children to get together with our volunteers.

Every week volunteers from the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest came to our house and got involved in different activities. Running around the yard and playing with the ball was one of the favourite games for the children.

The kids enjoy construction games and playing with plasticine together. The volunteers bring a lot of joy to the children and inspire them to develop their creativity.

Our little ones remembered old friends and made new ones. Weather being kind to us, the children managed to spend a lot of time outdoors with them.

For our children, it is a real joy to have a yard full of friends who will give them all the attention they need and the joy of spending time together.

And when it's time to rest, peace and calm is provided by stories and songs.

Every volunteer or friend of the children is part of the big CiD family, the place where children's love is unconditional.

Casa Maria is set and equipped as a family house where the children can feel the warmth of a home, the affection of a family.

We were surprised how easily and quickly the children integrated into the community.

From the first days, the children from the neighbourhood were curious to meet our little ones and play with them. Our children were happy and enjoyed how warmly and friendly they were received.

Children and staff enjoy the advantages of a small community. Getting to know the new neighbourhood continued in the park near the house, where a nice

playground is available.

During summer our Andrei turned eight, Mihaela three and Cristina 11.

Everybody is looking forward to seeing how the children will celebrate their birthdays in their new home, how parties will be at Casa Maria.

In this new family environment there are naturally high expectations that the cakes, gifts, playing, dancing and fun will be more pleasant than at the old St. Margaret's centre.

The children, as well as the staff do not forget to be grateful to our supporters who made everything possible at Casa Maria.

Your continuous support is deeply appreciated by us all.



Dog Days

Andrei, Bubu, Cristiana, Stefan and Cristina make some four-legged friends.



For several months, the friends from the Animal Assisted Therapy within the Utility Dogs Club supported our specialists at our centre with emotional self-regulation programs, the development of independent life skills and helping to acquire new information and skills.

During all this time, our little ones managed to learn new things such as: geometric shapes, their colors and shades, objects specific to the care of puppies – like collar, leash, bowl, brush – and to develop their vocabulary with new words, such as sit, lie down, and leash.

All this information supported the development of life skills, offering children a new perspective of social inclusion.

By learning elements of training in a controlled environment, our little ones managed to develop the ability to walk with the puppies near their home by the end of the project.

We were all happy to see the progress of each child as it translated into natural interactions with other children in the neighbourhood.

Stefan was the one who made the greatest efforts to focus himself on the responsibility of walking the puppy. Andrei showed a lot of empathy, care and responsibility, being careful that he and his puppy were safe on the street.

With the help of the puppy Betti, Cristina bravely managed to overcome her fear of other puppies in the neighbouring houses, who barked at every step.

Continued overleaf

Treats and a relaxing brush – it's a dog's life when Cristina and Bubu are entertaining you! And opposite Stefan goes walkies with his friend.

Casa Maria Opening

Here are some more photos from the opening of Casa Maria. HRH Princess Maria is pictured cutting a cake with CiD Ro CEO Valentina, and with our children: Andrei, Mihaela, and Robert.



Bubu managed to form many more sentences through the commands he gave to the puppies. The great joy was when he was able to express his own experiences without repeating the adult's words.

Although quite timid in the interaction with the puppies, Cristiana managed to feel the control and balance she needed through the walks with them.

With each walk made with the puppies, the children enjoyed greater contact with other members of the community that they now belong to.

Although we are saddened by the end of this wonderful project, we keep in our hearts the joy of the children's successes and hope that next year we will resume this wonderful project!



Spread the word!

We're Pinning our Hopes on You!

There are many ways you can help support our work. Even apparently small and simple ones can make a big difference. That's why in this issue of Vision we've included a pull-out poster (in the next pages) that we'd be grateful if you can display to help raise awareness of our work.

Here are some of the places you could put it up: a local shop; your church; a community centre; a café you go to; or, perhaps even where you work. We're sure there are others you can think of.

If you would like more copies of the poster, just get in touch and we'll happily

send as many as you need. Or, if you want it in a bigger size, or smaller as leaflet, we can provide those too, no problem.

And once you've got it pinned up, why not send us a photo of where you have displayed it and we'll give you a well-deserved 'thank you' on Facebook!

Send your snaps to:
admin2@childrenindistress.org.uk

Please note: the print version of Vision contained the poster (pictured above). If you would like a copy, please email us at the address above.



Above, previous beneficiaries of the programme. Right, Michael with his wife Varuni.



Dr Michael Janson Scholarship Programme

Children in Distress, in partnership with the Arges County School Inspectorate, has operated over the last three school years a scholarship programme named after Dr. Michael Janson, whose generous legacy provides the funds for the scholarships.

The programme was a success and has had a great impact on the lives of the students who received the scholarships, and on others who were encouraged by it to improve their school performance to qualify for the scholarship.

Therefore, we decided to continue to award 10 scholarships in the school year 2022 – 2023, as part of our school abandonment prevention programs.

The scholarships target mainly rural and poor areas. In addition to school performance, one of the criteria according

to which the scholarship applications are assessed is the economic status of the applicant's family.

This school year the scholarships will be granted around Christmas, to high school students in the 9th grade, in one single payment.

The scholarship project is a successful educational and school abandonment prevention program which we intend to transform into an ongoing service in the lives of the Arges county students.

We hope that this initiative will be supported by our local and foreign sponsors who will recognize what a difference it makes for the students who because of their poverty would not have been able to advance and reach their full potential.

Pineview

A new retreat for children with special needs



For the past 30 years Children in Distress has gained broad and deep experience in caring for children with special needs. For hundreds of children and their families, CiD has provided thousands of hours of physiotherapy, speech therapy, art therapy, socialisation programmes, and psychological counselling.

In this work, we realise that most children with special needs have little or no access to recreational and socialisation activities, such as playgrounds, camps, and field trips. The fact is that in developing recreational activities, children with special needs are mostly ignored. This situation risks marginalisation and social isolation for children and parents or caregivers, if they have them. To go somewhere to have fun, to have a “change of scenery”, to relax, is not an option.

Children in Distress aims to do something to redress this situation. Our vision is to build Pineview Retreat Lodge. The Lodge would be a complex which offers children with special needs time from their normal lives, a chance for their social integration, recreation, and therapy services.

Parents and caregivers also would have a time to rest and relax, and learn new

techniques for child-rearing in difficult circumstances.

Children in Distress has acquired a beautiful piece of land for the Lodge in the Carpathian Mountains (the Romanian Alps), near the town of Zarnesti.

An architect has donated her services to draw up the design plans. There is plenty of room in the Lodge for accommodation, physical therapy, communal meals, and a chapel space for prayer.

The property outdoors has a generous yard, with room for a playground, gazebo, and vegetable and flower gardens.

Children in Distress is in the process of obtaining the required approvals for the Lodge, including a construction permit.

We are raising money to cover the design works and, subject to available funds, we hope to start construction by the end of the next year.

Please wish us success in our exciting new project!

Above opposite: the beautiful location in Zarnesti for Pineview, and below and top visualisations of the building.





High school students volunteering



Ukraine Relief

Children in Distress continues to support evacuees from Ukraine who are in Romania.

Our current support focuses on food donations to the evacuee centre at Romexpo, the Bucharest Convention Centre. We are in close contact with Cosmina Simean, the General Director for Social Assistance of Bucharest. At Romexpo, evacuees have access to all sorts of items, from food to clothing, free of charge. There is also overnight accommodation and access to services for processing refugee papers. Most of the evacuees are mothers and children. Ms Simean contacts CiD when supplies

run low and asks us to help to fill up their stores. The most recent request, filled in mid-October, was for large quantities of flour, sugar and oil. We purchased these items in bulk at a discount market and then delivered them to Romexpo. Several of our high school volunteers helped unload and stack the supplies in the market area of the convention centre.

CiD will continue this work at Romexpo for as long as there is the need. Thank you to those who generously donated to our Ukrainian Appeal. Your generosity directly provides food for struggling mothers and their children.



Boxes of Delights

The St. Christopher's Centre is well known in the Curtea de Arges community. During the summer vulnerable children from there and nearby are involved in activities and programs helping them to overcome their different problems and support them, especially to remain in school.

One of the causes of leaving school is the lack of financial support. We do our best to involve the local community in our school programs, asking for a donation of clothes and school supplies.

Our efforts were rewarded and many good-hearted people answered our call.

When the children arrived at St. Christopher's at the beginning of the new school year, they had a great surprise, finding clothes to keep them warm the whole winter, school supplies and other

items necessary at school.

For the children it was a joy, but for their families it was a relief that they could, at least partially, overcome the worries and big expenses they have to cover every new school year.

We were told by the donors that their greatest satisfaction was to see the joy in the children's eyes, their excitement when they put on the new clothes, when they examined all the school supplies and the other items received.

Many thanks to all our supporters who made this wonderful surprise possible.

The good response of the community to our calls for help encourages us to continue to assist these vulnerable children, to develop for them new successful programs.

Christmas Gifts & Calendars

2023 Calendars

As requested by many of our wonderful supporters, we have a brand-new Children in Distress calendar on sale. Each month features images of our beautiful children as well as keeping you up to date with many important UK and Romanian holidays.

The calendars come in two sizes; A4 which is £7.50 and A5 which is £5.00. Please use the order form overleaf to get yours today.



Gifts from the Heart

Our special edition of Gifts from the Heart is a wonderful way to help the poorest children, families and older people in Romania have a happy Christmas and to let them know someone cares.

For each one you purchase, we will send you a special card describing the gift you have bought that you can give to a family member or friend in lieu of a normal present.

Writing Set
& Stationery



Hat, Scarf
& Gloves for
a Child

Christmas
Dinner &
Toy for Two
Adults & a
Child



Christmas
Dinner &
Toys for
Two Adults
& Three
Children

Selection
Boxes for Five
Children



Family
Toiletries
Pack

Winter Coat
& Boots for
an Adult



Winter Coat
& Boots for
a Child

Order form
overleaf

Calendars & Gifts from the Heart – Order Form

You can also order by phoning us on 0141 559 5690

Or online at www.childrenindistress.org/shop

To receive your order before Christmas, please return form by 19 December.

Item and Price	Quantity	Subtotal
Writing Set & Stationery – £5		£
Hat, Scarf & Glove Set – £10		£
Christmas Dinner & Toy (2 Adults 1 Child) – £30		£
Christmas Dinner & Toys (2 Adults 3 Children) – £50		£
Five Selection Boxes – £10		£
Family Toiletries Pack – £15		£
Winter Coat & Shoes (Child) – £40		£
Winter Coat & Shoes (Adult) – £60		£
Calendar Large (A4) – £7.50		£
Calendar Small (A5) – £5.00		£
I want to add a donation to my order		£
Total £		

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**Send to: Children in Distress, Suite 31 Ladywell Business Centre
94 Duke Street, Glasgow G4 0UW**



A Champion Effort!

Among our volunteers, Copii in Dificultate is privileged to have a team of athletes ready to take part in sports events to raise money for the children we look after.

Meet Sebastian, Adrian and Mihai, three competitive men inspired by the desire to support the needs of the children and to help them face their challenges.

This year, for the second time, they took part in three major sports competitions of swimming, biking and running. The X-man competition has become the favorite of this CiD Team.

Eager to win, in each competition the three athletes work together and act as a team.

Each time, Mihai is the one who opens the series of competitions through the

swimming test, then handing over the baton to Sebastian who bike rides. At the end, Adrian takes the baton from Sebastian and running brings the CiD team to the podium.

Beyond the medals and prizes won, they are spreading the message of support for vulnerable children. This CiD sport's team brings together three wonderful people passionate about sport and the joy of doing good things.



Our sports team not only increased the visibility of Copii in Dificultate, but raised 10,000 Euroes, a great contribution to our work.

Many thanks to Sebastian, Adrian and Mihai!



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We have a couple of wonderful ways you can help raise funds for us while you shop and it won't cost you a single penny. Why not give them a go when you're looking for that perfect Christmas gift, stocking filler or a treat for yourself.



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Go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/childrenindistress to sign up and choose from over 7,000 brands that will donate to us, including big names like eBay, John Lewis, Argos, M&S and many more! You can raise donations for us no matter what you're buying. Just remember to use **easyfundraising** when you shop online. You can also sign up by scanning the QR code with your smartphone.



BOO-tiful Displays!

Halloween may be a distant memory now as Christmas approaches but we thought we had to let you see the wonderful work our shop volunteers and staff did window dressing this spooky season.

Our three charity shops in England – in Guisborough, Kirkbymoorside and Sildon – have been key parts of our fundraising work for many years. They also play an important role in their local communities as a place for people to meet and chat. If you are ever in the area, pop in for a bargain!

In other UK news, our head office in Glasgow has moved, albeit just a few feet! It's been based in Ladywell Business Centre for many years but with the current financial challenges we thought it was time to downsize a bit. Thankfully,

a smaller suite in the same building became available so moving day wasn't as traumatic as it could have been. We're happy to report staff are settling into their cosier environment!

Above, a happy customer finds the perfect gown to wear to the Halloween Ball.



Enter the Dragon's Den!

In the UK, every year a courageous team from St. Lawrence Church, Seal Chart in Kent, take part in a Charity Dragonboat Race for the charities they support, including Children in Distress.

After yet another successful venture, we are very honoured and pleased to accept a wonderful donation of £240 from the congregation and crew of St Lawrence's Church.

Thank you to everyone who organised, took part in, and sponsored this event.

Over in Germany, recently our supporters setup a new charity. It's called HiKHeR, which stands for Hilfe für benachteiligte Kinder und Heranwachsende in Rumänien, meaning Help for Distressed Children and Young People in Romania.

They started their fundraising work by literally putting their feet where their hearts are. In the summer, members started

a 10,000+ step challenge, committing to walk at least 10,000 steps each day for five weeks. Supporters of all ages joined in the challenge, with many friends and family members sponsoring them. The successful group raised more than 1,500 Euros for Children in Distress!

Their next fundraiser was to register for a sponsorship program run by one of the big discount stores in Germany. It offered three charitable donations at each of their branches. Many people helped HiKHeR collect the vouchers needed to support their application and they won the second prize of 1,000 Euros.

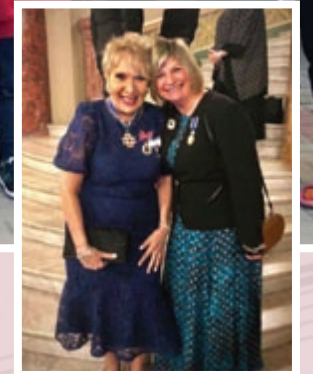
At the opening ceremony of Casa Maria they met our board members and presented CiD with 2,000 Euros.

Thank you to this new group and all their hard work.



Singing our Praises

Royal House of Romania Honours CiD Ambassadors



Nelly Miricioiu-Kirk (left) with Anne-Marie Martin

At a ceremony in October, Anne-Marie Martin and Nelly Miricioiu-Kirk, both CiD Ambassadors, were conferred distinctions at the Throne Hall of the Royal Palace in Bucharest.

Nelly is a renowned opera singer who has sung on stages throughout the world. Anne-Marie is Director of Global Business Networks for the British Chambers of Commerce and co-chair of CiD UK's Board of Trustees.

Nelly was awarded the Order of the Crown of Romania in the rank of Commander and Anne-Marie was awarded

the Custodian of the Crown Medal. Both Nelly and Anne-Marie live in London and are of Romanian parentage.

The day before they received their distinctions, Nelly and Anne-Marie visited Casa Maria with their husbands and soprano Valentina Naforntita.

The children had prepared autumn flowers to give to their guests. Following a tour of Casa Maria led by the excited children, Nelly and Valentina sat with them to sing some arias that enraptured everyone present.

Help support our work

Donate £ today

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