

## Stepping Out on Faith

You're considering going to Moldova to work with the Beginning of Life team at their annual summer retreat. Great choice! You will have the opportunity to put feet to your faith and make a profound impact on the lives of women in need, and you will form lifelong friendships with other like-minded team members. But make no mistake: you will be leaving your comfort zone.

Maybe you have started to research Moldova and know that it is a land-locked, crescent-shaped country bordered on the west by Romania and on the east by Russia, with its own ethnic division down the Dniester River. Moldova boasts a fledgling democracy, but Cold War Soviet Union reminders remain in its crumbling infrastructure and in the Russian peace-keeping troops that still patrol along the river where the camp is located.

Further research will show that summer temperatures hover around 100 degrees. Let's face it; it's hot and humid and there is no air-conditioned respite day or night. Since there are no screens on the windows of the camp cabins, you will probably want to keep your shared room closed up to avoid the marauding hoards of mosquitoes. Take insect repellent enough to wear and share: the women and children will appreciate it. Go ahead and pack modest shorts and sleeveless tops, if you like, and sturdy sandals. They are completely appropriate for camp.

The toilets are a bit of a trek from the cabins and they are literally holes in the floor. Even if you have fabulous quads for squatting, you'll appreciate the secret staff-only restroom with a real commode. Just remember, no paper of any kind flushes. Use the trash receptacle provided. The best time to shower is after lights out. There may not be any hot water left at that point, but you probably won't care.

And speaking of water, don't drink it from the tap. You will be drinking bottled or boiled water only. At mealtimes you will be provided fruit compote, or maybe you can embrace the Moldovan custom of drinking hot tea. If you can fit a hot pot and mug in your luggage (along with the insect repellent, battery-operated personal fan, toilet wipes, supplies, small gifts, snacks to share, and, of course, coffee or tea) you will make good use of it. There is an electrical outlet in the room.

You will get thirsty because you will be busy. Our team worked with children to give the mothers some much needed devotion time. The camp is understandably rustic, and paving stones, steps, and handrails are at best non-standard and at worst loose or missing. Watch your step and take a flashlight for after-dark trips (no pun intended!) If you have a chance to go to the river, be prepared for a little hike. Even in the city, you can count on uneven surfaces and steps.

Well, are you a trooper? I hope so because the experience you take away from Moldova will change you, and your contribution will leave a lasting imprint on many lives. As you venture out in faith, you will find blessings untold. Just beware of the top step at the dining hall; it's a doozie!

-- Julie Lewis, 2010 Moldova Team Member