



MAD-Aid Project Proposal

“A Wheelchair for Every Youth in Need” – Discarded UK Wheelchairs for Disabled Youth in Moldova

Summary

- There is an immediate and growing need for 1,000s of wheelchairs in Moldova
- The healthcare sector in the UK must by law discard and replace wheelchairs and other still usable medical equipment
- The UK charity MAD-Aid has the solid experience and established networks needed to collect, transport, and deliver the wheelchairs to individuals and hospitals in Moldova
- The project is a big *win-win* by saving hospitals the large cost of disposal and giving mobility and a chance at a better life to poor disabled Moldovans
- To execute the project, additional funds are needed to cover the costs of collection, storage, and transportation

Brief background

- MAD-Aid (“Make a Difference”) is a registered UK charity and Limited Company by Guarantee based on the Isle of Wight (2012). It has a Board of four Trustees with a Memorandum of Association. It is managed by one paid staff (since 2017), and projects are executed by a group of volunteers and collaborating partners.
- The charity helps children and youth with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova to gain mobility and thereby education and social inclusion. It also helps Moldovan hospitals to access high-quality medical equipment.
- Moldova is the poorest country in Europe.
- Victoria Dunford, a Moldovan Masters graduate in 2005, now living on the Isle of Wight with her husband, John, founded the charity in 2012.
- Her motivation for setting up the charity comes from the love of her country of birth and a strong desire to support the very weak and inadequate infrastructure (a legacy of the collapse of the Soviet Union), especially in relation to education and health.
- Working in the NHS, she was struck by how much of the equipment used by the hospital is upgraded on a regular basis, releasing huge amounts of very serviceable equipment that could be put to good use elsewhere. Currently this equipment either goes into storage, or the hospital pays for it to be taken away and disposed of – both options place a high-cost burden on the NHS.
- In 2017 Victoria received a *British Empire Medal* for helping children with special needs in Moldova. In 2015 Victoria received the *Civic Merit* medal from the President of Moldova for MAD-Aid work.

Recycling and transporting medical equipment

MAD-Aid collects, refurbishes, and stores discarded medical equipment from various hospitals and private medical companies (eg. Millbrook Healthcare), including a large number of wheelchairs of different shapes and sizes designed for various needs.

Since September 2012, MAD-Aid has collaborated with the Recycling Manager at St Mary’s Hospital and has collected over 900m³ (equivalent to 350+ tons) of equipment, which is worth an estimated

£250,000 at second-hand value. This constitutes nearly 90% of the equipment that was allocated to be disposed and has already saved St Mary's Hospital and Earl Mountbatten Hospice over £100,000.

Wheelchairs with minor damage are refurbished by UK prison volunteer workers.

MAD-Aid found a very cost-effective way to transport the equipment to hospitals in Moldova. Research uncovered that Primark clothes are made in Moldova and are delivered directly to the United Kingdom. This Moldovan transport company was willing to ship the equipment in its lorries to Moldova at a fraction of the normal cost - £3,500 each trip. 300 wheelchairs (along with other medical equipment) fit in each lorry.

In Moldova, MAD-Aid has a network of partners to ensure the equipment is delivered to individuals and hospitals as needed.

The charity works directly within the framework of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in that it helps eliminate poverty and improve health conditions in Moldova, offers inclusion and promotes the rights of people with disabilities, and reduces pressure on the environment from landfill disposal here in the UK.

In the medium-term, MAD-Aid aims to extend this program across Great Britain and to send the equipment to other developing countries around the world.

Delivering more wheelchairs to Moldova

At the start of operations, MAD-Aid saw the obvious opportunity to take discarded medical equipment from St Mary's Hospital on the Isle of Wight and to deliver it to Riscani Hospital in Moldova. Over the years since, it has become clear that there are far greater prospects.

The healthcare sector in the UK is scrapping and replacing much more than was first expected, and the hospitals in Moldova need everything from chairs to beds, from gloves to specialised equipment.

When MAD-Aid began to supply wheelchairs, the quantity was in the tens. Today, hundreds can be supplied.

The current waiting list of children and adults who need their first wheelchair numbers over 1,700. Every year an additional 1,000 disabled people need a wheelchair.

Thus, for 2018 and beyond, MAD-Aid aims to gear up its operations and significantly increase the number of wheelchairs delivered to disabled children and adults in Moldova, along with other medical equipment and furniture.

The goal of this project is to deliver 1,200 more discarded and refurbished wheelchairs to Moldova each year for three years, thereby drastically improving the lives of 3,600 disabled Moldovans.

The cost of this wheelchair project

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Collect and refurbish 1,200 wheelchairs from UK hospitals	15,000	16,000	17,000
Store wheelchairs	2,400	2,400	2,400
Deliver 1,200 wheelchairs to Moldova	14,000	15,000	16,000
Distribute 1,200 wheelchairs in Moldova	400	450	500
	31,800	33,850	35,900

NB. The cost to collect, store, refurbish, deliver, and distribute one wheelchair to one disabled child or adult living in Moldova is £26.50.

MAD-Aid's achievements (outputs/outcomes) to date

- Re-used in Moldova of 350+ tonnes of good quality equipment and furniture that would otherwise have had to be shipped off the Isle of Wight to the mainland for disposal.
- Refurbished and distributed 500+ wheelchairs that would otherwise have been scrapped, leading to mobility for 500+ disabled children and adults in Moldova.
- Delivered hospital aid to Moldova, Bulgaria, Belorussia, Ukraine, and Africa.
- Contributed to significant improvements to hospital wards in Moldovan hospitals.
- Diminished environmental damage in the UK from the disposal of this equipment in a landfill.
- Opened the first modern centre for children with special needs in the north of Moldova with our partners – Communication Workers Union Humanitarian Aid and Child Aid.
- Opened a day centre for elderly in a remote village of Moldova in partnership with local authorities.
- Lobbied, advocated, and worked with the Government of Moldova to ensure the adoption and respect of the following conventions and legislation:

UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2010) and adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (2015). Nationally enacted Law no.60 on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2012) and approved the National Program for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2011-2020.

MAD-Aid is proud of its achievements so far, but there is much more to do. While there is even one mobility-impaired child without a wheelchair, or one hospital patient lying on an old, rusty bed, that is one too many.

In the words of the blind author Helen Keller, *“We cannot do everything, but we can do something and we must not fail to do that which we can”*.

The story behind MAD-Aid

MAD-Aid's founder, Victoria Dunford, was born and raised in the Republic of Moldova, rated by the World Bank as the poorest country in Europe. After completing her Bachelors and Master's degrees in Moldova, Victoria had the opportunity to come to the UK for a year. She met her husband, and stayed, but Moldova remains her home country and her love.

Once part of the Soviet Union, Moldova lost a huge part of its infrastructure when the Soviet Union collapsed. Not long before opening the charity, Victoria's mother had surgery in a local Moldovan hospital. To Victoria, the thin, stained mattresses on rigid iron beds, the chipped tiles, the lack of hot water and the blood-pressure meter with three holes in it were normal. It was only later when she started to work in a UK hospital on the Isle of Wight that she realised just how different a modern hospital could be.

UK hospitals spend millions of pounds each year updating equipment so that they can stay at the cutting edge of healthcare. There is no room to keep the old equipment, and it either goes into storage, at great expense, or the hospital pays for it to be taken away and disposed of. Victoria thought of that poorly equipped Moldovan hospital with its leaky blood pressure meters, and said “We must be able to do something to get that equipment to where it is needed.” The hospitals she spoke to agreed, and MAD-Aid was formed.

And that wasn't all. When she was young, Victoria believed Moldova had no children with disabilities. They were there, but they were invisible. Because mobility aids are almost non-existent, children with mobility problems cannot access education unless their parents can afford to pay for private tuition in their home. These isolated children become isolated adults, trapped at home alone for long periods, and lacking the support they need.

The benefits to the local community in the United Kingdom

MAD-Aid's activities play a significant role in its local community on the Isle of Wight. It saves money for charities such as the Earl Mountbatten Hospice and others, the Red Cross, government hospitals, nursing homes, and the Environment Agency.

MAD-Aid supports its local UK community by:

- Recycling medical equipment
- Preventing usable equipment from going into landfill
- Saving the local health sector the cost of disposal fees
- Providing useful rehabilitative work for prisoner volunteers
- Encouraging volunteer programs

The beneficiaries

Our primary beneficiaries are children and adults with disabilities in Moldova.

Secondly, the hospitals, which are spared the disposal costs for the equipment that MAD-Aid takes from them. The savings of many thousands of pounds can then be spent on patient care.

Thirdly, the environment: the equipment would normally be buried deep in a landfill. MAD-Aid's recycling reduces the environmental impact of disposal.

Finally, the wheelchairs are refurbished by inmates in Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight. This has given the prison volunteers a challenging and worthwhile objective and has provided them with engaging and satisfying work.

Licenses and permissions

- MAD-Aid is licensed by the UK Environment Agency to carry waste
- MAD-Aid works in close partnership with the local NGO, Moldova AID, to ensure all the import documentation is in place and monitored
- We strictly follow relevant Environment Agency policy and Moldovan Government policy on receiving aid

Monitoring and evaluation

MAD-Aid has systems in place for organising and monitoring its aid and has legal documentation in place in the UK and in Moldova for every item that has been collected and delivered.

Moldova AID, MAD-Aid's official partner in Moldova, also keeps track of every item that comes in the country. Everything is reported quarterly to the relevant ministers (social protection and financial).

Activities are monitored regularly by Trustees.

To finance the operation of its various programs and projects, MAD-Aid runs regular charity fundraising events and receives donations both from individuals and institutional donors. The finances of the charity are managed by the trustees and the executive director. The accounts are presented and discussed at the bi-monthly trustee meeting. Bank transactions require the signatures of two nominated trustees.

Collaborative work

In the UK MAD-Aid has close working relationships with:

- ✓ St Mary's Hospital, Isle of Wight
- ✓ Earl Mountbatten Hospice, Isle of Wight
- ✓ Southampton Hospice
- ✓ The Moldovan Embassy in the UK
- ✓ Barchester Nursing Homes
- ✓ The British Red Cross

- ✓ Parkhurst Prison, Isle of Wight
- ✓ Community Action Isle of Wight
- ✓ Island Mobility

In Moldova MAD-Aid has close working relationships with:

- ✓ Moldova AID – MAD-Aid's executing local partner NGO
- ✓ Ministry of Health, Labour, Social Protection and Family (MHLSPF)
- ✓ Other Moldovan central and local public authorities
- ✓ British Embassy and Ambassador in Moldova
- ✓ Other Public Health Authorities
- ✓ CREPOR - the main government agency responsible for monitoring citizens with disabilities and their needs
- ✓ Other relevant Moldovan NGOs

More information at <http://www.mad-aid.org.uk> and info@mad-aid.org.uk