



Babichi Orphanage Appeal

Babichi orphans desperately need our help.

You may well recall that, a couple of years ago, I appealed to all clubs to help fund the provision of treatment and testing equipment in School 27, a school for visually impaired children in Gomel, Belarus. This project has been very successfully completed, and there are now many hundreds of children with sight problems receiving help through our efforts.

Your help, and your club's donations, were invaluable in making the School 27 project a success, and are desperately needed again to make a real improvement to the lives of many orphans, so badly affected by poverty and the Chernobyl catastrophe. Your Council of Governors has given me permission to appeal to all clubs in the Multiple District for donations.

Belarus is one of the poorest countries in Europe, and has very few natural resources with which to create wealth. It is still very severely affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe of 1986 in many different ways. Therefore, the work of the Lions Belarus Trust continues to be invaluable to assist those less fortunate in this hard-hit region. For around ten years now, we have been visiting Gomel, and working with our contacts there, to assist schools, needy families and community projects. We have now formed a Lions Club in Gomel, which will further assist our work.

During my trips to Gomel over the last couple of years, along with various other members of the Lions Belarus Trust, I have visited an orphanage for between 150 and 200 children in Babichi, a country area about an hour from the city. The orphanage is also a school, and the children are there the whole of the time.

Conditions at the orphanage are dire and, although the staff do their best, their efforts are mostly in vain because of one major problem. The school was first built in 1968, and still has the original flat roof of bitumen sheeting. Whilst it has been patched over the years, it is in desperate need of replacement. The inside walls are always damp, and much of the time are running with water. Therefore, the children suffer incessantly from coughs, colds, flu, bronchitis, asthma, etc., and it is impossible to improve their conditions until the roof is re-built.

The funding system for schools on Belarus relies very heavily on parental contributions, and does not extend to building repairs, the cost and labour for which is normally found by the parents. Despite the fact that, being an orphanage, Babichi has no parental support, it receives no extra funding from the state, and does not have any means to fund the replacement of the roof.

The orphanage is a very large, sprawling building, and the cost of re-building the roof with modern, durable materials, will be 75,000. The project will be managed by our friends in the area education department through a designated bank account, with full accountability. It is important that we get this work done before another harsh winter sets in.

Please dig deep, so that we can get this vital work done as quickly as possible. Please send cheques, made payable to Lions Belarus Trust, to 23 Aveley Lane, Farnham, Surrey. GU9 8PR. If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on howardlee@ukonline.co.uk, or on 01252 734530.

Past International Director, Lion Howard Lee.

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Useful Links

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