



ANNUAL REPORT

October 2019 – December 2020

Annual Report

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Albanian Mission Against Human Trafficking

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Protect your
daughter
Educate
your Son !!



RESTOR

radhës

- shkruar
- Mënysh
 - Media
 - Përkrah
 - Shqipëri

PRINDER:
EMBAJINI AFER
TEMIJET TUAJ
SHTU MINIMIZOHEN
STET E ABUZIMIT

▶ LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE LEADER

The year 2020 was a year of profound change unleashed by the spread of COVID-19 across the globe. A return to the pre-pandemic status quo seems almost unthinkable from our current perspective. The world we knew seems destined to never return.

Collectively facing challenges of immense proportion, it is the poor and marginalised among us who are disproportionately affected by shocks like this. Local economic hardship contributes to the increased vulnerability of certain groups for exploitation and enslavement. At the same time, travel restrictions and lockdowns compound the challenges we face in reaching exactly these at-risk groups.

Yet COVID-19 has also taught us a fundamental truth: we are all deeply connected. The outpouring of compassion, generosity and talent from everyday British and Spanish citizens and our partner NGOs in Europe, the USA and Albania has been simply overwhelming. This support allowed us to continue Mary Ward Loreto Foundation's efforts this year. To each person who invested their time, money and heart, I extend to you our collective heartfelt gratitude.

Now, more than ever, we are blessed by the guidance and leadership of our board of directors and president, Imelda Poole IBVM / MBE. I am honoured by the trust they have placed in me and my colleagues to lead this foundation and continue its mission.



As an NGO, our single driving motivation for greater efficiency is the ability to serve greater numbers of those in need. All the various MWL teams went the extra mile to help and support the needy and those most at risk this past year. Their unwavering commitment to our mission, despite many challenges, is inspiring and humbling.

The big question now is where do we go from here. The need for assistance among the least fortunate is now greater than ever before, and so a compelling rationale exists to expand our service offerings. This, however, can only be achieved through even greater engagement on the part of our supporters and friends. There is truly no worthier cause than preventing a life led in slavery or assisting victims in rebuilding their lives in freedom. We can accomplish the greatest good at a cost we all can afford.

It has been an experience like none other to lead this remarkable organisation, side by side with my amazing colleagues during this turbulent year. Together we will overcome the present hardships and achieve even greater success in the years to come.

Sincerely Yours,
Ana Stakaj

► SUMMARY

Remarkable work was accomplished during this past year despite the many challenges and roadblocks resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak. Meeting the immense challenges posed by two unexpected crises was at the centre of our attention over this reporting period. These two events were the earthquake of November 2019 and the ongoing consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdown.

Assistance distributed through our network of MWL Advice and Service Centres (ASCs) has been the focal point of our response. The ASCs have always constituted an essential component in the provision of support services by bridging the gap between communities and state institutions and NGOs. This unique position allowed for greater impact by allowing us to respond to the needs of people at the local and community level more effectively. Leveraging expert knowledge of local communities through the ASCs allowed us to find more sustainable solutions and make better informed decisions.

We worked hard to ensure no one in need was left behind. Thus, MWL collaborated with fellow NGOs, communities of faith and local government officials to identify, refer and assist the most vulnerable families and individuals in need of aid and support. Because of this cooperation, MWL reached more than 13,000 people through its programmes during 2020.

Despite our focus on crisis response, the work of our other programmes was not neglected. For example, MWL actively pursued its ambitious goal of contributing to

the elimination of corruption and unethical practice in the Albanian education system via its Education Project. A total of 326 teachers, parents and representatives of statutory services across 13 regions of Albania attended trainings on ethics in the education system. Moreover, we led research on the perceived causes of unethical behaviour and corruption in the Albanian education system was conducted and published the results.

Although it was not an ideal year to pilot a new organisational structure, MWL nevertheless took on the challenge of transitioning to a TEAL organisational structure. Training sessions, strategies and learnings were conducted and formulated throughout the year. Although an ongoing process and nowhere complete, a consensus has emerged that it is the right way for us to move forward.

All this leads to the compelling vision of Mary Ward Loreto planting hope with a human rights approach to combating modern day slavery. This challenging mission is implemented daily through our focus on justice, education, grass roots action and systemic change outlined in this report.

A | EARTHQUAKE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

In the early morning of 26 November 2019, Albania was hit by an earthquake which resulted in the loss of 51 lives, countless injured and thousands of flats and houses rendered uninhabitable. In response to this natural disaster, our work immediately shifted to meeting the needs of the survivors. MWL Staff were immediately mobilised to provide emergency support to families and children.

Support from our partners was of critical importance to our response strategy. The MWL ASC Tirana led a project financed by the Italian Bishop's Conference (CEI) through Caritas Albania for emergency support for families and individuals in Tirana who were affected by the earthquake. This project saw the distribution of food packages, the restoration of damaged buildings, access to healthcare and psychological support, community trainings for civil emergencies, trainings for service providers on civil emergency response and referrals to relevant services.

Furthermore, the MWL ASC Tirana worked in partnership with the Jesuit Fathers of a parish in the hard-hit region of Kombinat from April onwards. Close coordination and deliberation with the Jesuits in the area allowed for the efficient and targeted delivery of services to those most in need. The identification of beneficiaries was also supported through the involvement of local municipality officials.

Remarkable work was also done by the MWL ASC Shkoder during this period of crisis. MWL staff organised volunteers and activated other NGOs for a donation drive to collect food and clothing in Shkoder. Because of their commitment, MWL was able to deliver food packages and clothes to more than 200 families directly affected by the earthquake in Durres, Thumane, Lac (Gjorm, Sanxhak), Marikaj, Lezha and Shengjin. During this campaign, they raised 2,869 EUR, which went largely for the purchase of medication and other medical supplies for affected individuals.



Earthquake and Covid-19 Emergency Support

490

families received emergency support in the form of food, clothes and personal care products.

144

children received school supplies.

225

families received personal care products.

702

people directly affected by the earthquake in Thumane received meals.

25

infrared thermometers were donated to preschools.

8008

individuals (7868 children and 140 staff members) from 28 preschool were provided personal care products and disinfectant to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

334

food packages were donated in collaboration with the Food Bank Albania and distributed to families most in need because of the earthquake and Covid-19 lockdown.

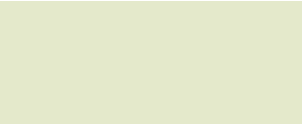
B | COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

In response to the very real hardships faced by so many families due to COVID-19, the MWL Foundation teamed up with benefactors, local churches, food banks, municipalities and other key actors in the areas MWL serves. Emergency assistance took the form of distributing food and other basic goods. In total, the foundation assisted over 142 families in 6 regions of the country with the goal of maintaining their health and safety. The Arise Foundation, MW Spain and the ERTE foundation provided essential support to MWL's activities during this crisis.





During the nationwide quarantine, we remained committed to our mission and continued supporting our beneficiaries from our homes to theirs. The MWL ASC Tirana continued to run our psychological services during this period as people protected themselves and others by staying home. Additionally, we offered online emergency psychological support for individuals throughout all regions of Albania. This move to providing online services was of great benefit to individuals outside of Tirana.



C | MWL PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

C1. ADVICE AND SERVICE CENTRES PROGRAMME

In each region we operate, the local MWL ASCs forms the focal point of our service offerings and engagement with local communities. These centres offer advice, counselling and services to all individuals vulnerable to human trafficking and/or social, legal, emotional and/or economic exploitation. Standing in partnership with the National Referral Mechanism and the Coalition of Shelters in Albania, MWL ASCs provide a wide array of in-house services, such as rescue, referral and other services for victims of trafficking and exploitation. Each centre and program have a devoted team of advisors, while each group of beneficiaries of the centre chose a representational leader. In this way, all staff members, beneficiaries and other stakeholders actively play a role in shaping the outcome and outputs of the foundation's work.

During this year our ASC programme was engaged in the following fields of activities.



1.1. Human Development Activities

Supporting human development continues to be a central focus of the foundation as there remains an ever-present need among individuals and certain groups to increase their awareness of newly emerging forms and tactics of human trafficking. During this reporting period, 80 trainings were conducted, resulting in **1,300 participants** receiving customised human development support according to the needs of their specific cases and regions.

1.2. Awareness Raising Activities

Awareness-raising activities form a core component of our service offering through the ASCs. During this period, **1,200 individuals attended over 36 awareness-raising activities** organised through our 6 ASCs. Session topics included awareness-raising of various health issues, domestic violence, human anti-trafficking education and positive parenting. In these sessions, we aimed to raise awareness among our four target groups: professional service providers, young adults and students, members of the public and women.





1.3. Health Support and Medical Treatment

Increasing access to medical treatment and support services remains an important aspect of the work conducted through the ASCs across the country. In total, **132 people** benefited from these services and received health support and medical treatment. Of these, 4 individuals received life-saving surgical procedures. In Tropoja, 40 individuals received prescription glasses, while 88 others received support in securing prescription medication and medical examinations. MWL ASC staff play an essential role in this process by making appointments, accompanying patients and providing emotional support throughout the treatment period and beyond.



1.4. Counselling, Therapy and Psychological Support

During this reporting period, a total of **96 people** received psychological support services through the MWL ASCs. More than half of these cases were handled by the MWL ASC Tirana, which offered support services itself or referred cases to partnering institutions. As a result, **15 individuals** of these 96 received online support services through our collaboration with the Medaille Trust in the UK.

Although other ASCs are not currently staffed with resident psychologists, they nonetheless provided essential mental health services throughout the country. Next to referral services, they provide financial support for treatment for those in need. For example, the MWL ASC Shkoder referred **26 individuals** for assessment during this period, while the MWL ASC Lezha referred **4 individuals** and MWL ASC Tropoja referred **8 persons**. As a result, **17 individuals** received **special treatment for mental health issues**.

1.5. Direct Assistance for Survivors

Direct assistance for survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence continued to be successfully administered nationally through the network of MWL ASCs. During this period, **73 cases of domestic violence** were referred to our ASC centres resulting in individuals receiving necessary care and follow up services. At the MWL ASC Tirana, 7 initial cases of victims or potential victims of trafficking were identified along with an additional 2 cases of re-trafficking. Members of the MWL ASC Tirana also produced **8 reports** to support the asylum application process for 4 trafficking survivors in the UK. Throughout the country, **17 human trafficking cases** were handled by MWL ASC members. Of these cases, 16 were registered in Tirana and a single case identified in Tropoja.

1.6. Sheltering

During this reporting period, the foundation provided **temporary sheltering for 45 people** in extreme need. This service was provided to victims and potential victims of trafficking who could not be referred to shelters due to a lack of space or unwillingness of the persons in need to be housed in a shelter. Additionally, MWL facilitated shelter for people whose homes were rendered uninhabitable because of the earthquake and its aftershocks.

Advice and Service Centres Programme

84

at-risk individuals received reimbursement for transport costs to access necessary services.

148

individuals received information and assistance in acquiring documentation required to obtain social services.

132

individuals received assistance in receiving medical health examinations and necessary medications.

4

individuals received full cost coverage for lifesaving surgical procedures.

42

individuals were referred and received legal assistance.

79

individuals received psychological assessments, counselling and treatment.

17

individuals received specialist assistance for mental health issues.

45

individuals received sheltering or were referred for sheltering.

73

cases of domestic violence were addressed by MWL ASC staff.

32

cases of human trafficking were handled by MWL ASC staff.

10

initial identifications of P/VoTs were made by MWL ASC staff.

140

individuals were referred to local social services.

1.7. Legal Assistance

Through the MWL ASCs **42 individuals** received free legal assistance and referrals to other partner organisations which also provide legal counsel free of charge. Cases are followed closely and supported by staff members in the MWL ASCs in Tirana, Lezha, Saranda, Tropoja and Shkoder.



C2. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

2.1. Employment, Referral and Vocational Training Guidance

The youth programme targets four areas in the north of the country: Shkoder, Lushnja, Rreshen and Puka. In Shkoder the programme was made possible through a joint donation by MWMF and SS Simon & Jude School. The Lushnja programme was sponsored through a donation by the Congregation of Jesus Charitable Trust. In Rreshen, financing was received from IBVM. Unfortunately, funding for the Puka programme could not be secured. However, thanks to the kindness of RENATE, a Christmas retreat was organised for 15 previously participating youth of the Puka programme. We hope sponsoring for the Puka programme can be secured in 2021 through our ad hoc facilitator.

An invaluable component common to all 4 programmes is the reimbursement of transportation costs to training centres. This simple act allows youth to participate in vocational training otherwise unavailable to them because of their socio-economic circumstances. Other aspects common to all the programmes include:

► **Orientation and Regular Participation in Vocational Training Courses**

In Shkoder, 6 youth received vocational training as hairdressers while 4 others were trained as plumbers. In Lushnja, this programme was attended by 5 young men, who trained as plumbers, and 5 young women, who trained as tailors. Eleven youth joined this programme in Rreshen. Eight of the youth were able to complete their training whereas COVID-19 lockdown has delayed the completion for the remaining three.

► **Internships**

Through MWL's initiative and collaboration with vocational training centres in Shkoder, Tirana and Fier, every trainee could exercise their theoretical knowledge in a real work environment through participation in internships. In Rreshen, 3 participants will have their chance after their initial training courses have been completed.



► **Tool Kits**

The youth of Shkoder and Lushnja received kits providing the tools necessary to exercise their new professions and ease their transition to self-employment. The group in Rreshen will receive theirs in February 2021.

► **Youth-Proposed Community Action**

Young adults receiving vocational training were empowered to identify needs in their communities and execute projects to address these needs. Thus, among other important projects, trainees in Shkoder mobilized to support the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Lushnja, the trainees organised a food and personal hygiene item donation drive to provide for 3 families in need. Resulting from the highly impactful and visible community actions organised and undertaken by the youth, rent-free office space was offered by the municipality of Rreshen, which leads the regional anti-trafficking committee.

► **Job Search and Entrepreneurship Training**

The 3 groups had the opportunity to participate in 2 sessions covering the topics of job search skills and entrepreneurship. After understanding the importance and role of job interviews, each participant drafted their own CV in the European Europass format. Entrepreneurship training assisted them in drafting business plans and familiarised them with start-up funding opportunities offered by our partners, such as the UNDP and YUNUS Social Business.

► **Socializing Activities**

Three socializing activities were organised to strengthen the bonds between participants while enjoying time to relax and have fun together.

► **Career Orientation and Follow Up Towards Employment**

To date, 14 youth (9 men and 5 women) out of 31 programme participants have secured employment. Targeted follow-ups with those still seeking employment will be conducted in 2021 to support their efforts. In Rreshen, an additional 9 youth, not directly participating in this programme, were referred to vocational trainings offered by DIMAK. Three of these individuals are now employed.

► **Human Development Trainings**

Trainees of the Shkoder cohort participated in two trainings on the fight against human trafficking. The first session was organised by the group's coach, an MWL ASC employee, and the second by the NGO NISMA ARSIS. These trainings were held in preparation for the UN GIFT BOX Campaign in Shkoder. Trainees of the Lushnja and Rreshen groups also received anti-human trafficking training. Additionally, the Shkoder and Lushnja cohorts participated in a training entitled "Different Yet Equal", delivered by the MWL programme leader. The training raised awareness of various forms of discrimination and empowered youth to value diversity. This training is planned for February 2021 in Rreshen.

► **MWL Certificate Award Ceremony**

In Shkoder and Lushnja, participating youth were awarded an MWL certificate recognizing and celebrating their journey towards employment. The activities and forms of engagement they participated in during their training period were highlighted on the certificate. A ceremony to award certificates will be held in Rreshen upon completion of the programme in March.

► **RENATE Retreat**

A retreat was organised for the youth of Rreshen on 14-15 December with the support of RENATE. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 28 who participated in MWL's Youth Employment Programme within the last 3 years were invited to attend this retreat led by 2 psychologists. The two-day event was held in Razem, a peaceful and quiet location far removed from the attendees' everyday lives.

Similarly, a second retreat on 23-24 December in Razem with youth from Puka was made possible through the generous support of RENATE. The presence of two professional psychologists leading the activities helped the youth to better understand the interconnected nature of thoughts, emotions and behaviours and how changes made to one link can positively affect the others. Understanding one's emotional landscape and its management were the subjects of continued dialogue based on the youth's real-world experiences.



ASCs in other regions were also engaged in employment promoting activities to contribute to the economic and personal empowerment of the communities they serve. To date, **139 individuals have received employment and vocational training assistance through the active involvement of all our MSL ASCs nationwide.**

2.2. Vegetable Seeds for Rural Families in Need

In collaboration with the Food Bank Albania, the MWL ASCs of Saranda, Tirana, Shkoder and Tropoja distributed boxes of vegetable seeds to 60 families residing in remote rural areas. This initiative is a simple investment which produces high yields in contributing to the food security of rural families. The assistance was well received by the families, and we wish them a bountiful harvest.

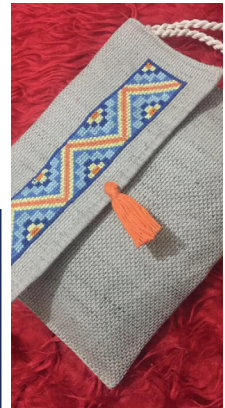
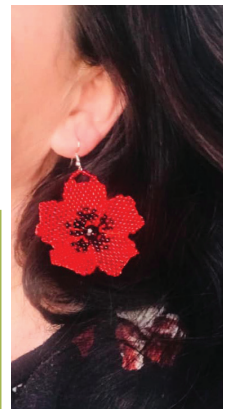
2.3. MWL Social Business

During this reporting period, the MWL Foundation was active in running two social businesses: one located in Kallmet and the second in Tropoja.

The social business model in Kallmet takes the form of a tailor shop providing vocational and professional training to **5 part-time employed women**. Training goals during this period focused on building the women's expertise in improving product quality while reducing costs and production time. The acquisition of a three-headed sewing machine, an ironing board and a professional embroidery machine, all thanks to the enormous generosity and support of Mary Ward Spain, greatly aided in achieving these goals. Additionally, Mary Ward Spain sponsored the women's training in professional cutting, sewing machine operation and new model crafting techniques. The results of this capacity building were immediately visible: the women's productivity increased considerably through the employment of improved techniques, greater personal ambition and higher expectations of their own work performance.

In Tropoja **20 women** market and sell their own products in a store staffed by a **seasonally employed saleswoman**. Participating women received technical training to increase the quality of the traditional crafts they

produce. Advancements were made, in part, through the close partnership between the MWL Foundation and the Competitive Skills Centre. The two organisations cooperated to conduct trainings under the umbrella of the GIZ-funded project entitled “Creating Living Traditional Communities”. Moreover, a new location for the sales kiosk in Valbona was secured due to the excellent partnership between MWL and the Municipality of Tropoja. We are grateful to the municipality for generously donating a prime, rent-free location for the new sales point.





Despite these notable successes in the first quarter, the effects of the global COVID-19 outbreak posed significant challenges for MWL in growing and maintaining the operations of these two social businesses.

Except for MW Spain, both domestic and international clients cancelled or downgraded their orders. Nevertheless, 19,200 EUR in revenue was achieved this year.

Although the Valbona shop enjoyed modest revenue in 2019, the business is currently in a fight for survival. Located in a remote mountainous area, the target market is comprised almost exclusively of tourists. Due to both border crossing restrictions between Kosovo and Albania and the COVID-19 lockdown, very few tourists visited the region in 2020. Sales consequently plummeted and resulted in a total revenue of 1,650 EUR.

Despite these difficulties, we have managed to close the year off in a relatively solid position. We remain hopeful and optimistic that our operations will resume quickly once pandemic related restrictions have been eased. This period of forced closure gave us the opportunity to cultivate business relations with partners, while exploring new possibilities for the future. As the success of the Secret Sisterhood shows, online sales and ordering is an attractive option moving forward.

Economic Empowerment Programme

139 individuals actively participated and benefited from the employment, referral and vocational training guidance programme.	26 women benefited from employment through our 2 social businesses.	115 families received vegetable seeds donated by the Food Bank Albania.
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C3. MWL Education Project

The ambitious goal of the Education Project is to actively contribute to the elimination of corruption and unethical practice in the Albanian education system by strengthening the necessary value system and democratisation in education. To achieve this goal, the project sets out the following 3 components outlined below.

MWL Education Project

The results of the academic research project entitled “The Perceived Causes of Unethical Behaviour and Corruption in the Education System in Albania” were published.

326 teachers, parents and representatives of statutory services attended **13 training sessions** on ethics organised in the regions of Tropoja, Shkoder, Lezha, Tirana, Elbasan, Vlore and Saranda.

Ethics committee members of **5 schools** were trained on the roles and responsibilities of ethics committees in schools and how they contribute to the positive development of the education system.

People from **84 institutions** providing instruction to youth benefited from ethics training.

Service learning methodology was introduced in **4 schools**, two in Lezha and two schools in Tropoja, which involved the training of **63 school staff members**.

400 students were trained in the different stages of a service learning project lifecycle, including community mapping, planning, budgeting, etc.

3.1. Research on the Perceived Causes of Unethical Behaviour and Corruption in the Education System in Albania.

The current project is a continuation of the national research study entitled “Ethics in the Education System in Albania”, originally published in April 2017. This new research was designed to identify what factors contribute to

a widespread social acceptance of unethical and corrupt behaviour and how teachers, parents, pupils, lecturers and students justify unethical behaviour. Considering the sensitive nature of the topic, considerable time, energy and close communication with the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports was required to successfully conduct this research.

Members of the project's education board were actively involved in every stage of the project. By providing invaluable feedback and guidance, they guaranteed the integrity and design of the research project. The company ACER was chosen to conduct the actual research, collect data and provide methodological guidance in the formulation of the survey questionnaire.

The study focused on three levels of education, from elementary to university, in three regions of the country: Vlore, Tirana and Shkoder. However, the scope of the initial project plan had to be scaled back due to the closure of educational institutions because of COVID-19 and a lack of support from the Ministry of Education Sports and Youth. Despite these challenges, 65 pupils, 29 parents, 64 teachers, 489 students and 59 lecturers participated in the study by filling out the questionnaire digitally online.

Among the main findings, the study identifies the presence of moderate to high levels of corruption and unethical practices across all levels of the Albanian education system. Unlike previous studies, this research clearly shows how pupils and parents are singled out by all parties as the most frequent initiators of corrupt behaviour across pre-university levels.

Research findings further indicate that a lack of trust is the main factor contributing to low reporting rates of ethical violations and corrupt behaviour across all levels of Albania's education system. Specifically, individuals lack faith in the fairness exhibited by institutions and the impartiality of the justice system. This attitude leads to the perception that reporting violations has no value and results in nothing.

The research findings of this study are currently available in both Albanian and English and will be soon available for download via the MWL webpage.

Preparations are currently underway to organise a nationwide conference to launch the research findings. Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, this conference will take place via Zoom on 27 February.



3.2. Trainings in ethics for teachers

Based on the above-mentioned research findings, a series of trainings in ethics for teachers was organised throughout the entire country. For this purpose, an agreement was signed with the Northern Regional Department of Albania, which secured the signoff of the Albanian ministry of education to allow teachers to attend the trainings. MWL staff, in consultation with members of the education board, designed the training modules and a training plan which was shared with the regional education departments of Lezha, Shkoder, Tropoja and Mirdita.

The first two training sessions took place in Lezha at the end of February. The plan foresaw the completion of trainings in northern regions of the county by mid-April, at which point training would have shifted to southern

regions. However, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, all training plans were suspended in accordance with the law forbidding any gathering of more than 5 people. Trainings were therefore subsequently held online.

Additionally, members of the ethics committee of 5 schools received training in the role ethics committees are designed to play within schools. An accompanying manual was produced and made available to school ethics committees as a reference guide and capacity building tool. The manual is intended as a guide to assist ethics committees in handling cases of reported ethics violations in a more professional manner.

In total, 326 individuals, comprised of teachers, parents and representatives of statutory services, from 84 different institutions attended 13 training in the regions of Tropoja, Shkoder, Lezha, Tirana, Elbasan, Vlore and Saranda.

3.3. Service Learning

The introduction of service learning methodology was initiated in 4 schools, two in Lezha and two schools in Tropoja, and involved the training of 63 school staff members. Local partners, NGO staff and community members were also invited along to familiarise themselves with this methodology and the benefits it provides for both the learning process and community itself. Likewise, students in two participating 9-grade schools, a high school and a vocational school received training in service learning methodology.

The total number of actively engaged students in these various projects has now reached over 400. Consequently, 400 students have received training in various aspects of the service learning project lifecycle, including community mapping, planning, budgeting and more. Many projects were in the implementation stage when all school-based activities and instruction were halted on 12 March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. To keep them engaged, school-based projects were continued in an online format whenever feasible.

C4. Community Development Programme



4.1. Folk and Touristic Pride Project in Lezha

This project was financed by the EU Delegation in Albania within the framework of the RELOAD Programme managed by the UNDP and implemented by MWL through the MWL ASC in Lezha. During the eight-month project between June 2019 and January 2020, three main project objectives were pursued.

Community Development



The first goal was to increase citizen engagement in their communities by organising meetings and training sessions with students. In total, **10 schools participated** in various sporting activities and **29 students organised** local celebrations based on their ideas and hard work. It is our hope that these now become local traditions in their respective communities.

As the second goal, a classroom in the local school of Gjader (Lezha region) was repurposed as a location for the community's newly established community centre. The centre is designed to be a place where local tradition and culture is displayed and preserved for future generations. Traditional clothing, local tools and household decorations donated by community members are now proudly on display.

As the final goal, **5 local festivals** throughout the region of Lezha were organised with the strong support of local government leaders. Local festivals such as these are not only tourist products but also serve a vital role in strengthening a shared identity and sense of community among residents. By cultivating an appreciation of the wealth of experience in their communities, these activities are also considered a preventive measure against migration by creating a sense of hope and pride in living in their own country.





4.2. Youth Empowerment for Sustainability (YES)

– Saranda, Delvina and Lezha

Adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18 from rural communities in the far south and north of Albania are most at risk of being trafficked across borders. Therefore, the goal of this project is to empower 40 adolescents from Saranda, Delvina and Lezha and create a corps of motivated youth who can act as engines for change in their communities. The project is co-funded in Saranda and Delvina by Healing Hands - Do Terra and in Lezha and Delvina by ARISE.

Launched in November 2020, this project provides youth with the necessary tools to achieve personal and economic growth and avoid the risk of human trafficking through pursuing the following components.

A. Training for Transformation and Effecting Change

The MWL ASCs of Saranda and Lezha divided the selected youth into two groups per community and assisted them in establishing their own youth clubs. To date, 6 meetings have been held with the participating youth. During the weekly meetings of the two clubs, participants discussed their daily challenges as well as their dreams or desires for themselves and their communities. Further sessions were held to help the youth acquire skills necessary for working in groups, effective communication and collective decision-making. As a result, the youth have already begun the process of drafting their own action plans on how to continue their activities after the completion of the project.

From January to April 2021, MWL and NISMA – Arsis will develop the training modules to realise change in their communities and support local development by bridging divides within and between communities.

B. Capacity Building for Local Authorities in Case Management Support and Victim Protection

Employing a trauma-oriented approach, this programme builds government agencies' ability to provide more professional support to P/VOTs of human trafficking. Currently, child protection units and state employed social workers are untrained and lack the necessary skills to conduct proper SOP-driven determinations. They are also ill-equipped to provide effective case management support. Thus, the goal of this project is to train 20 state officials in delivering high-quality child protection services and primary services to P/VoTs.

The local municipality administrations of Saranda and Delvina, the office of the state prosecutor, the local branch of the ministry of education and various schools have all stated their support for this project. The project has moved to the stage of conducting a needs assessment to provide members of these various institutions with a tailored training program that considers their current abilities.



4.3. Promoting the Right of Women and Girls to Access Services in Tropoja

This project was financed by the EU through the Social Centre “Hapat e Lehte” and a small grant scheme entitled “Women in Initiative”. It aims for the social transformation of women, girls and their communities through human and economic development programs, advocacy work, lobbying and networking. Central to this task is ensuring women and girls access to resources, their rights are respected and opportunities provided for their personal development. A holistic approach is employed by creating a broad network of allies who promote the education and inclusion of women, girls, men, local agencies and partner organisations.

4.4. Psychological Services and Sanitizing Supplies for the Lezha Municipality Preschools System

This project was funded by the EU through the UNDP’s Reload Project Albania and supported the Municipality of Lezha in establishing disease prevention measures in preschools in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. MWL ASC Lezha led this project in partnership with the Municipality of Lezha and preschool administrations throughout the region of Lezha.

Via this project, **a)** 7,868 children and 140 adult staff members at 28 preschools benefited from the provision of cleaning and disinfecting supplies; **b)** 80 preschool staff members were trained in COVID-related safety guidelines and disease prevention; **c)** 50 posters were designed and displayed in 28 preschools to raise awareness of how to stop the spread of COVID-19; and **d)** 90 school staff members attended three training sessions on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children’s mental health.

4.5. Young Women’s Leadership Project in Saranda and Tropoja

“Empowering Girl Leaders to Animate for Change and their Future” is a project funded by Misesan Cara and implemented by MWL ASCs in Saranda and Tropoja. The goal of this project is to empower 50 adolescent girls from these two regions and create a corps of motivated young women who can

act as initiators of change in their communities. The location of both project points is important as their remoteness and proximity to the border increases the risk of exploitation and trafficking. In total, 54 adolescent girls between the ages of 13 and 18 from rural communities in Saranda and Tropoja have been involved in this project to date.

Despite being the same project, its implementation diverged to best meet the local needs of the two very different regions in terms of history, culture and religion. Therefore, the project description below is split between the two project sites.

1. Activities in Saranda:

A highly interactive series of trainings were offered through 3 modules with the intent of empowering 24 young women for collective community action. Trainings were conducted at the local school of Xarre and gathered together girls from 4 different communities in the region: Xarre, Vrine, Konispol and Shendelli. The three modules of the training comprised the following topics:

- **Leadership and Service Learning**

This block of trainings provided the young women with a toolkit of skills necessary for successfully collaborating with others and included the topics of leadership, collaboration, effective communication, negative to positive thinking, problem solving and service learning.

- **Community Activism and Volunteerism**

To run their own small-scale community projects in small working groups, the young women received training in methods of community organisation, PACA tools, goal setting and planning, activism in practice and creating a timeline and implementation plan.

- **Healthy Relationships and Self-Realisation**

Participants were coached on life skills necessary to lead healthy and fulfilling lives, such as achieving self-realisation through positivity and

personal values, thinking critically about gender stereotypes and myths, building self-esteem, identifying healthy and unhealthy relationship dynamics and protecting oneself against human trafficking. As a result of this project, two GLOW clubs (Girls Leading Our World) have been formed. Participation levels and enthusiasm for activities and civic engagement among the active corps of girls remains high. Two additional groups of girls are also interested in organizing projects which would improve the quality of life in their communities.



2. Activities in Tropoja

This project entails the following four components.

- **Social Activities**

The group of adolescent girls have had two opportunities to meet and socialise in a relaxed atmosphere while celebrating the holidays of Thanksgiving Day and Christmas.

- **Trainings**

As part of the project, participating girls have received trainings in relevant topics of concern in their daily lives, which included social media and human trafficking, prejudices and discrimination, domestic violence and Albanian law, self-esteem, public speaking, suicide prevention, career counselling, social animation, self-defence and character driven leadership.

- **Direct Participation in Initiatives**

Two programmes specifically addressing the economic development and emotional wellbeing of the target group of young women were initiated. In the first, participants learned how to make bracelets and other handicraft items. Afterwards they turned their attention to increasing production capabilities, methods for growing sales and generating revenue for their economic empowerment. The second initiative focused on their emotional wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing psychosocial support through online sessions.

- **Co-organisation of Community Events**

During the project, participants co-organised the numerous events with staff members of the local MWL ASC. Events included Christmas donation drives, art competitions, organizing protest marches to lobby for the protection of children and freedom from sexual violence as well as the active promotion of tourist attractions in their region.



D | ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURING

Since November 2019, the MWL Foundation has been engaged with the task of redesigning its organisational structure from a Green to Teal coloured structure, based on Frederick Laloux’s model outlined in his book “Reinventing Organisations”. This new model was introduced by the MWL President to better support the current mission of the foundation while enabling its evolution into a “living structure”. This transition has been largely made possible through financing provided by Misesan Cara as part of their MCD grant scheme.

To achieve this transition to a Teal structure, MWL has identified 4 crucial and interlocking steps:

- 1 Acceptance and adoption of the Teal model by MWL team members
- 2 Capacity building for staff and team members
- 3 Identification of new approaches to achieve greater impact for target groups and their communities
- 4 Decentralizing decision-making and promoting leadership among staff members reorganised into self-managing teams

Despite an extremely challenging operational environment this year, the following advancements were made regarding these steps.

Staff Trainings on Teal Organisational Methodology

A deeper understanding of Teal structures was provided to MWL staff by an external expert, Ms Margie Buchannan. The MWL programme leader then began the process of advising and coaching project staff on applying this structure within their teams, advisory boards and community groups. Additionally, a generous IBVM Generalate donation enabled the MWL Executive Team to participate in a two-day training led by Bobby Moore, who supported the Executive Team in fully grasping the entire extent of change required to make the transformation towards self-managing teams. Lastly, an evaluation of the foundation’s operational systems was undertaken by the Executive Team under the guidance of an external expert.

Formation of Self-Managing Teams

Although the process of forming new teams was completed, the implementation of Teal related work processes within these newly formed groups is not uniform. As a result of the restructuring:

- The overall management and execution of the MWL Foundation's action plan is led by the four-member strong Executive Leadership Team.
- The MWL Development Team is tasked with ensuring financial sustainability to pursue the mission of MWL along with conducting general financial oversight of the organisation. This team has fully converted to a Teal structure.
- Attempts by ASC and project staff to create self-managing teams have had mixed results. Currently, staff members meet in a peer-to-peer group meeting format to address topics and issues. Rather than solving these through collective decision-making, issues continue to be deferred to the Execute Team for resolution.
- The creation of self-managing teams to support the work of the ASCs in MWL's target regions has yet to be fully realised. Initially, these teams were to be made up of different stakeholders from partner organisations operating in the same regions as the ASCs. Currently, various individuals still act as project advisors in the regions ASCs operate.

The Path Towards Wholeness

A weeklong retreat was held to draft a new strategic plan for the foundation. Sessions were facilitated by Shkelzen Marku, an international expert in strategic planning, social business and economic development. As a result, a new strategic concept was drafted which should guide us through this period of organisational restructuring to greater efficiency in achieving the foundation's mission. MWL staff were actively engaged every step of the way in drafting both programme area and operational plans.



In general, the beginning stages of adopting a Teal structure this year have been a beneficial learning experience. Leadership is now a shared responsibility. Decision-making has been decentralised to the team level. Decisions are increasingly reached through improved dialogue and reflection within and across teams. Greater transparency and more open communication amongst staff members have stimulated a sense of belonging and ownership. Staff no longer consider themselves merely as employees of an NGO but as critical individuals committed to fulfilling both organisational and personal goals.

E | SUSTAINABILITY

In addition to the Executive Leadership Team, the restructuring process created a second key team, the Development Team. This team is comprised of members of the Executive Team (CEO and CFO) and MWL's President, Imelda Poole. The Development Team focused on three sets of activities during this reporting period.

Firstly, significant attention was placed on utilizing domestic sources of funding. Correspondingly, the Development Team submitted over 40 applications. Due in part to these efforts, MWL was able to run 21 projects funded by 18 donor organisations last year.

Expanding the foundation's network of international donors is likewise of crucial importance for the organisation to adequately fund its widening portfolio of projects. Thus, secondly, Triple Minds was hired for an 18-month consultancy to assist in building the foundation's fundraising expertise with European and US donors.

Thirdly, a UK-based fundraiser has been helping the Development Team expand our fundraising reach in creative ways. A series of fundraising events occurred during this reporting period and others are planned to be held in UK during the coming year. Additionally, the newly formed "Group of Mary Ward Friends" in the UK has greatly assisted in enhancing our ability to organise fundraising events.

F NETWORKING AND STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATION'S PUBLIC PROFILE IN ALBANIA AND ABROAD

A host of various international networking events were attended by the foundation in this period to elevate the status and recognition of the organisation. To this end, a gala lunch at the Groucho Club in London was organised to create a body of influencers for MWL's mission both in the UK and Albania. A group of 20 influential personalities from the legal community, civil society, community policing, fundraising and universities attended the event.

Cooperation and partnership ventures with other internationally operating NGOs such as RENATE, the Medaille Trust, ARISE, Triple Minds, Ethical Goods, Crowdfunding UK and NPV were strengthened during this reporting period. In particular, the Development Team worked to create new opportunities for joint, cross-border applications with the Medaille Trust in the UK.

The MWL Executive President and Leader also entered in dialogue with the University of St. Mary's University College, Twickenham. This partnership foresees St. Mary's to research human trafficking, migration and domestic abuse in the UK and Albania followed by a prevention project based on the recommendations of this research which aims impact at the grassroots level.

Within Albania, the standing of MWL was raised through several key partnerships. For example, the foundation is now the primary civil society partner for the municipal governments of Lezha, Tropoja and Konispol. The foundation was also recognised as one of three main services provides in Tirana and Lezha by the Civil Society for Victims and Potential Victims of Human Trafficking. This was achieved through MWL's appointment as a member of the society's regional committees and technical teams.

Additionally, MWL's president, Imelda Poole IBVM, was nominated for a TIP HERO Award this year by the US embassies in Albania, the UK and the Vatican.



Finally, participation in the establishment of the UK based Anti-Trafficking Alliance (AMSA) opened new opportunities abroad. This newly formed foundation focuses on anti-trafficking work in both the UK and Albania and is constitutionally linked to developing work projects with the MWL Foundation as a partner organisation. AMSA will provide:

G | GOALS AND UPCOMING PROJECTS FOR 2021:

- ⇒ Creating new opportunities for the development of joint and cross border applications with Medaille Trust (UK), the University of St. Mary's and other potential partners. Such partnerships will develop and expand MWL's expertise and reputation as a valuable and strong partner.
- ⇒ Continued capacity building training for MWL staff in the TEAL methodology of organisational structure.
- ⇒ Organisation of the Groucho Club Gala Dinner – a UK fundraising event for MWL.
- ⇒ At least 20 applications for external funding will be sent to donor institutions to secure the financial resources necessary to sustain MWL's programmes.
- ⇒ Organisation of activities surrounding the UN Anti-Trafficking Day
- ⇒ Advice and Service Centre programmes fully funded and operating at full capacity.
- ⇒ The continuation and expansion of service learning mini-projects involving youth.
- ⇒ Summer camps for youth & children in all target regions served.
- ⇒ Expansion of emergency services provided by ASCs, such as food and shelter.
- ⇒ Further development of the Economic Empowerment Programme as one of the vehicles for reducing the vulnerability of human trafficking, exploitation and the illegal migration of youth.

Epilogue from the MWL President, Imelda Poole IBVM/MBE

This reporting time has been an extraordinary year. I have experienced and witnessed the dedication and sheer grit of the MWL staff who have worked tirelessly throughout this period to achieve the goals of the mission of MWL. These were severely challenged by crisis management presented during the post-earthquake era and which was followed sharply by the global pandemic. This can be only seen as purely heroic. We recommend all the staff for their true dedication and willingness to be flexible, kind and collaborative throughout this time of suffering and mystery.

We know that self-managing teams are not all easy to work with, especially at the beginning, and there have been challenges in working out the best methodologies to enable them to function well. This was made more difficult because of social distancing, lock downs and illness. At least half of the staff team suffered from COVID-19 and some with more difficult circumstances than others. They managed to get the balance right and were not afraid to move online but were also not afraid, with care and protection, to respond to emergency needs in the field and to conduct trainings in the most marginalised areas where the IT support was not available. Funding was not readily accessible at the level we would all want for the mission this year, but the generosity of the MWL staff in stretching funds to fulfil the purpose on the ground, was wonderful to see. You can see from this report how amazingly this mission has been achieved and in the most creative of ways. To combat human trafficking is a mission that is not a popular mission in the eyes of most people. Albania is still considered a tough place in the list of countries to be given funding, similar to the rest of the south Balkans, but we proceed with great trust knowing it is a worthy mission. It is the one in which we are combatting the most heinous crime in our world today where up to date statistics state:

150.2 billion dollars are the annual profits of human trafficking in the world, two thirds of which derive from sexual exploitation

21.800 dollars are the annual profits per sexually exploited victim of trafficking, 4.800 in the building, manufacturing, mining and utilities sectors, 2.500 in farming, and 2.300 in domestic work.

34.800 dollars are the annual profits per victim of trafficking in advanced economies, 15.000 dollars in the Middle East, 7.500 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 5.000 in Asia Pacific, and 3.900 in Africa.

50% of exploited workers carry out forced labour to pay off a debt (peonage).

337.462 euros was the economic, social and human cost per victim in Europe (UE27) in 2016 (latest available data).

200.000 dollars is the economic return for an organ transplant in Western Europe against payment of 10.000 dollars to a “donor” living in extreme poverty in Central America

Mary Ward Loreto strives to stay in touch with the real and to make those most vulnerable to being trafficked, the exploited and the trafficked with whom we work, have a strong voice to speak with us in our advocacy and awareness raising task. The dignity and respect given to all, with a desire to mutually empower each other as friends and companions on the way, is the fruit of this work. We can absolutely say that the family of this foundation has exploded, as our partners and beneficiaries become our friends, working together to realise the fullness of life intended for all. Pope Francis understands this crime in a fully eclectic way. All the above concerns are his concerns and he can see the vital connectedness of the need for reform. Without these reforms, climate change and care of the planet and the fact that we all belong to a common home do not make sense. We are called by Pope Francis to have the common good at heart. All people are our brothers and sisters, he says, how can we sit back and remain indifferent to millions dying of starvation every day, millions trafficked into the most degrading and cruel of trades. His latest encyclicals ‘Fratelli Tutti’ and ‘Laudato si’ are at the heart of this call for change. We are called to open our eyes and change our hearts to acknowledge the need for every human being to be given the dignity and respect which is their human right. This is the aim and goal for all the work of MWL into the future.

We thank all our many donors and benefactors across the globe who have sustained us and encouraged us throughout this challenging year. Thank you!

Annual Report

October 2019 – December 2020

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