



Albanian Mission Against Human Trafficking



# INTERIM REPORT

OCTOBER 2019 – MARCH 2020

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## SIX MONTHS WHICH CHANGED THE WORLD

Meeting the formidable challenges of two unexpected events has been at the centre of our attention over the 6 months of this reporting period: the emergency response to the earthquake on 26th November and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic nationwide lockdown. Being there where we are most needed, support for families and individuals has been administered through our ASCs. Working to ensure no one is left behind, the foundation has collaborated with NGOs, communities of faith and local government officials to identify, refer and assist the most vulnerable families and individuals.

Central to this task is the MWL ASCs, which constitute an essential component in the provision of support services by bridging the gap between communities and state and non-state institutions. Addressing community needs at the grass-root level better positions us to understand the issues they face in greater detail. Thus, by working with partner organizations and community members jointly, we can make more appropriate decisions and find more sustainable solutions.

During this implementation period the 6 Advice and Service Centres (ASC) of Tirana, Shkoder, Konispol, Tropoje, Lushnje and Lezhe also achieved significant success in reducing the vulnerability and risk of human trafficking through increasing access to statutory and non-statutory services. This on-going work of empowering people in need to seek their rights, protection and support from respective service providers is achieved through a comprehensive approach of education, referrals, service offerings and follow-ups.

Great change has come to us as an organization as well. Since November 2019, the MWL Foundation has been engaged with the task of redesigning its organizational structure away from a green and towards a teal coloured operating style, based on Frederick Laloux's model outlined in his book "Reinventing Organizations". This new model has been introduced to better support the current mission of the foundation while allowing for new possibilities. All necessary training for a successful restructuring has been initiated by Imelda Poole IBVM, the President of MWL. Further trainings will be conducted at the staff training week this autumn.

As a result of the redesign, all teams now work in closer cooperation and coordination, listening and sharing expertise to effectively respond to the needs and challenges we face in our daily work. The foundation aims to be a "living





structure” which evolves in response to benefactors’ real-world needs. Addressing these needs is the result of careful reflection and joint discernment. It is a dynamic process that positively impacts our methodology and strengthens us as a team and organization.

As the example of our restructuring shows, our story during this difficult time is not only one of our response to earthquakes and COVID-19. As this report indicates, our regular programs continued and new projects were implemented during this reporting period. We take special pride in highlighting human development activities and various campaigns against human trafficking conducted in cooperation with our many partners. Together, our work continues to empower and strengthen the livelihoods of those most vulnerable: Roma communities, vulnerable groups of women, youth and students.

## ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURING

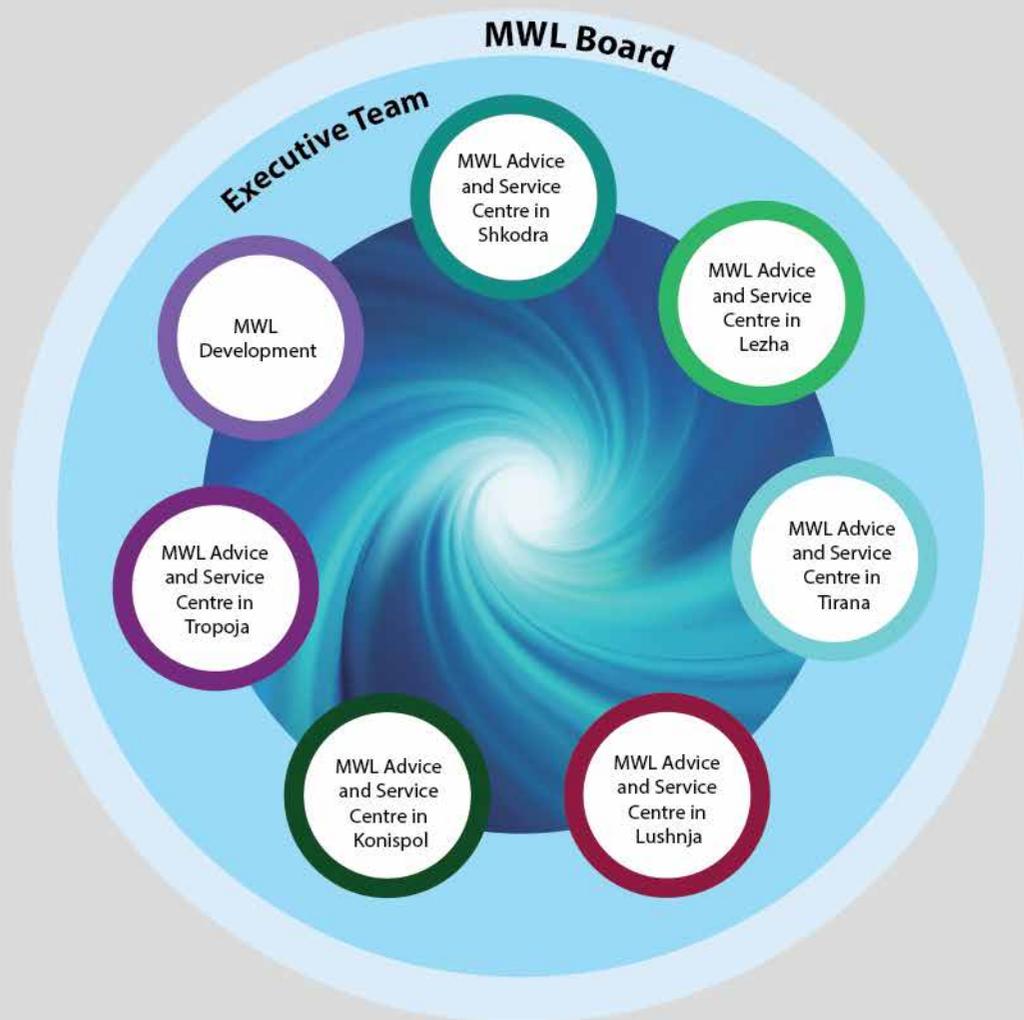
The new status of the organization has been officially registered with the appropriate officials. The overall management and execution of the MWL Foundation’s action plan is now led by the Executive Leadership Team based in Tirana. This team consists of four staff members, who have all held key leadership positions in MWL for at least 6 years. The respective roles of the executive team are:

1. Executive Leader – CEO – Ana Stakaj
2. Finance Leader - Artan Toska
3. Programme Leader – Gazmir Memaj
4. Social Business and Events Leader – Pjeter Tanushaj.

The Executive Leadership Team meets once weekly for status and planning sessions. Moreover, it provides the MWL Board operational and financial reports on a quarterly basis, while the CEO is obliged to update the members of the Board of Directors on a more frequent basis. If necessary, the president of the foundation can be invited by the executive team to cast a vote to break a deadlock in the voting process.



## MARY WARD LORETO ORGANOGRAM



In addition to the Executive Leadership Team, the restructuring process created a second key team, the Development Team. This team is composed of members of the Executive Team and our President, Imelda Poole. The role of this group encompasses the following 3 main functions of equal importance:

### 1. Strengthening new organizational structures to achieve greater impact

To ensure the implementation of the strategic plan and the TEAL Methodology, particular attention was placed during the restructuring of MWL on achieving the following goals: 1) acceptance and adoption of the TEAL concept by MWL team members, 2) capacity building for staff and team members, 3) the identification of new approaches to achieve greater impact for target groups and their communities, and 4) a policy of decision-making decentralization and the promotion of leadership among staff members.

### 2. 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 with the intention of elevating 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 Team also entered into dialogue with the University of St. Mary’s University College, Twickenham. This partnership foresees St. Mary’s to conduct research on human trafficking, migration and domestic abuse in the UK and Albania. The MWL Foundation will play a leading role in the research as a local Albanian NGO. This partnership, along with others mentioned above, will act to catalyse MWL’s further development of expertise, circle of influence and 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 Lezhë, Tropojë and Konispol. The foundation was also recognised as one of three main service providers in Tirana and Lezhë 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.

Lastly, 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.

### 3. Securing and maintaining financial viability through fundraising

The focus of this work centred on three sets of activities during this reporting period. Firstly, significant attention was placed on utilising domestic funding sources. Correspondingly, the MWL Executive Team submitted over 30 applications in the six-month time period. MWL is currently running 21 projects funded by 18 donor organisations.

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 period to consult the foundation on building fundraising expertise when targeting European and US donors. Triple Minds will assist and train the executive leader and a US-based, ad hoc development specialist. Work began with the production of a donor map composed of 30 possible prospects. The target is to network and submit funding applications with 20 agencies, focusing on a wide variety of various EU institutions, UN bodies, trusts, foundations and charities aligned with MWL's mission.

Finally, participation in the establishment of the UK based Anti-Trafficking Alliance (ATA) opened new funding opportunities abroad. This newly formed foundation focuses on anti-trafficking work in both the UK and Albania and is constitutionally linked to develop work projects with the MWL Foundation as a partner organisation. The ATA will provide: 1) legal aid for victims and potential victims of cross border human trafficking, 2) support in expanding the alliance to include over 800 NGOs currently working independently in the UK, 3) coordination in developing apps which support victims and potential victims, and 4) lobbying services to ensure the passing of new trauma-informed and victim-centred legislation addressing human rights and modern forms of slavery.

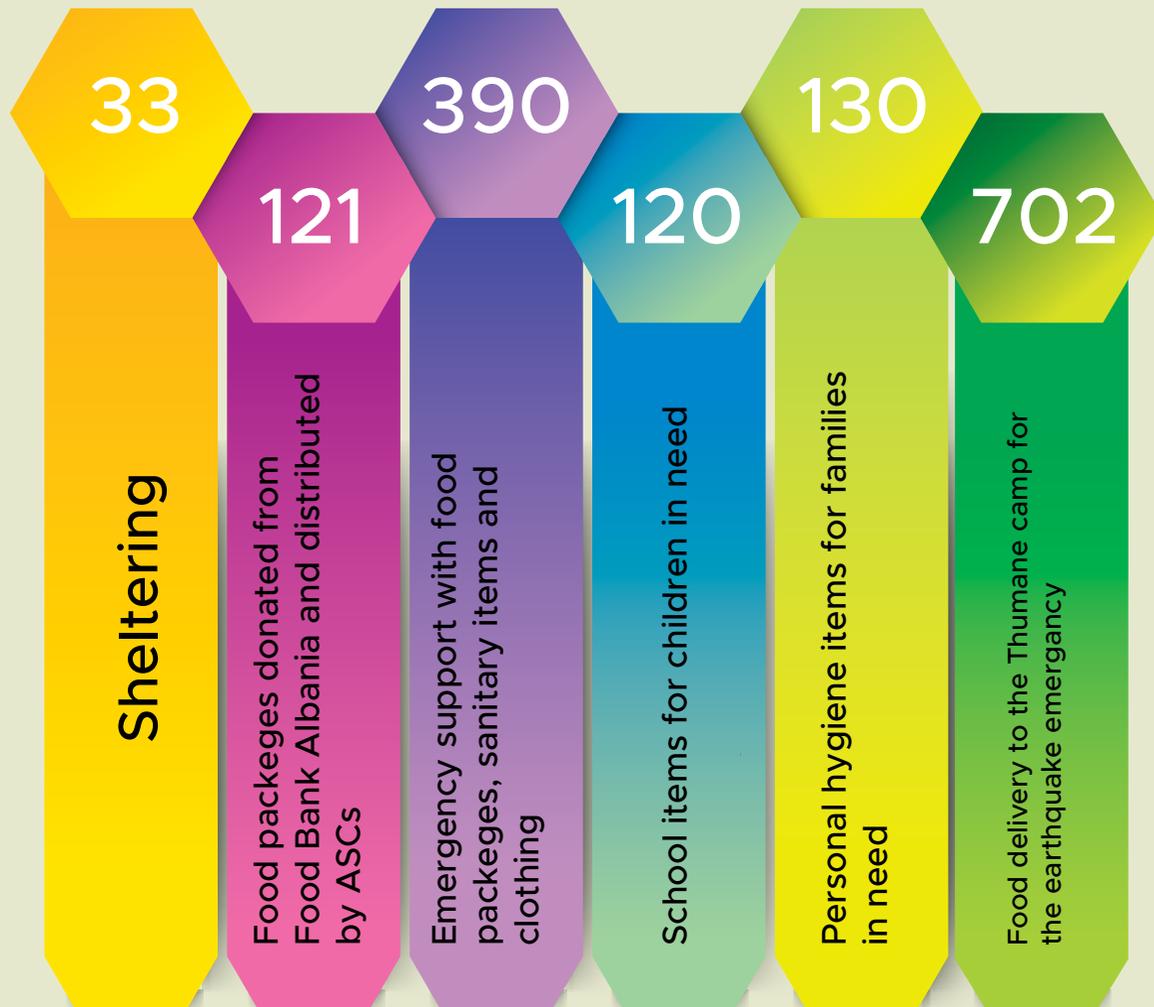
The current operating staff consists of psychologists, social workers, youth



workers and a social operator who, collectively, conduct outreach work in 13 municipalities across 6 regions of Albania. In each region, the MWL Advice and Service Centre forms the focal point of service provision 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 economic exploitation. Networked with the National Referral Mechanism and the Coalition of Shelters in Albania, the centres 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.

Our approach has been highly successful and beneficial. Leadership is now a shared responsibility, decision making takes place in a less hierarchical structure and decisions are reached through increased dialogue and reflection within and across teams. Greater transparency and more open communication amongst staff members have stimulated a sense of belonging and ownership of the organization. Staff no longer consider themselves merely as employees of an NGO: they are empowered as crucial individuals committed to fulfilling both organizational and personal goals. It is this synthesis of the organization's activities and individual member's personal goals that create greater value and impact.

# EMERGENCY SUPPORT FOR THE EARTHQUAKE AND COVID19 EMERGENCIES



## EARTHQUAKE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

In the early morning of 26 November 2019, Albania was severely affected by an earthquake resulting in the loss of 51 lives, countless injured and thousands of flats and houses left uninhabitable. In response to this enormous challenge, our work necessarily shifted to meet the needs of the survivors. For example, more than 2,500 residents of Thumane, Kurbin and Lezhë fled and sought shelter in hotels in neighbouring Shengjin when a state of emergency was declared in Lezhë. Staff were immediately mobilized to provide emergency support to the families and children affected. As an immediate response, the MWL ASC Tirana, in collaboration with Caritas, prepared food for 702 people. In cooperation with the MWL ASC Shkoder, personal hygiene items were



Figure 2. Photo of the devastation of the earthquake in Thumane and the preparation and delivery of sandwiches at the Thumane camp.

made available to 130 people sheltered at the Frojd hotel in Shengjin. Furthermore, the MWL ASC Lezhë stepped forward and provided notebooks and pens for children who were restarting school in Shengjin but who lacked basic school supplies.

Remarkable work was done by the MWL ASC Shkoder during this period of crisis. MWL staff organized volunteers and activated other NGOs for a donation drive for food and clothing in Shkoder. As a result of their commitment, we were able to deliver food packages and clothes to more than 200 families directly affected by the earthquake in Durrës, Thumanë, Lac (Gjorm, Sanxhak), Marikaj, Lezhë and Shëngjin. During this campaign, they raised 2,869 Euro, which went largely for the purchase of medication and other medical supplies for affected individuals. Funds were collected from literally around the world – a 163 Euro donation was even received by a group of Albanians residing in Australia.



Figure 3. Gathering and distributing food and clothes for families hit by the earthquake.

## COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

On 09 March 2020, Albanian officials announced the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country. The COVID-19 pandemic, which had been tightening its grip around the world, had finally arrived. Despite many measures taken by the Albanian government to stop its spread, the number of infected people continued to rise throughout the country, and, correspondingly, an increase in the number of fatalities.

As everywhere around the world, every aspect of our daily lives has been impacted in some way or another as the country entered quarantine and all socio-economic activities ground to a halt. Social distancing policies and guidelines resulted in an unprecedented number of individuals now finding themselves isolated at home, without the opportunity to find work, earn money or secure a livelihood for themselves and their families. The closure of schools, kindergartens and all other educational institutions has also led to the physical isolation of children in the hope of preventing the spread of the virus. As always, it is the most vulnerable groups in society who are at the greatest risk and in danger of losing the most. Poor families with little to no income, elderly individuals living alone without family and those falling into unemployment all need assistance now more than ever.

In response to the very real hardships facing so many families at the moment, the MWL Foundation teamed up with local churches, food banks, municipalities and other key actors in the areas MWL services to provide emergency assistance in the form of food and other basic goods. In total, the foundation assisted over 142 families in 6 regions of the country intending to help them maintain their health and safety.





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. Respecting social distancing strategies, all the centre's sessions transitioned to online platforms so we can continue to provide individuals with the support they need.

In addition to our regular counselling services, we now offer online emergency psychological support for individuals throughout all regions of Albania. Both MWL ASC Tirana psychologists are available online, and anyone can receive professional psychological service by contacting the centre online or by phone. This move to providing services online is of great benefit to individuals outside of Tirana by allowing them access to general psychological support services.

## DESCRIPTION OF ASC PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

### 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 6-month reporting period, 29 trainings were conducted, resulting in 657 participants receiving customized human development support according to the needs of their specific cases and regions.



Figure 4. A training in ASC Shkodra on Domestic Violence.

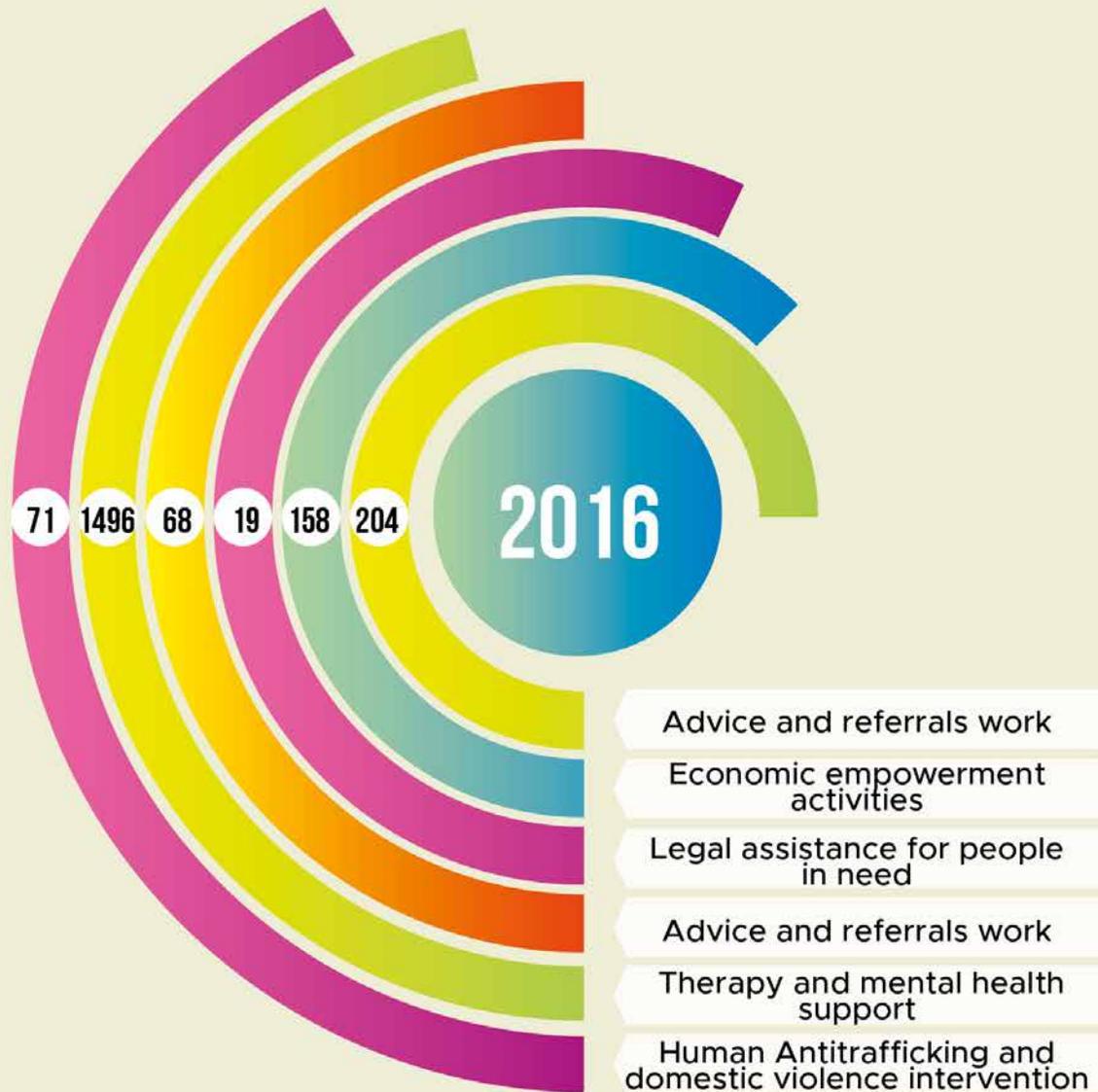


Figure 5. During the training "Communication of Diagnosis to Patients Affected by Cancer".



Figure 6. Young women's leadership camp, Konispol.

# MWL ASC WORK IN NUMBERS



## AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES

Awareness-raising activities form a core component of our service offering through the ASCs. During this period, 462 individuals attended over 17 awareness-raising activities organized 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 the four target groups. These included the following:

### a. Service professionals

Examples include training for 11 medical staff in the Lekbibaj Health Centre, entitled “Identification and Referral of Victims of Domestic Violence in Health Institutions”, and the participation of 35 hospital staff members in Bayram Curri for a training run in collaboration with the psycho-social service unit of QSUT, entitled “Communication of Diagnosis to Patients Affected by Cancer”.



Figure 7 “Social Media and Human Trafficking” Awareness Raising Session.

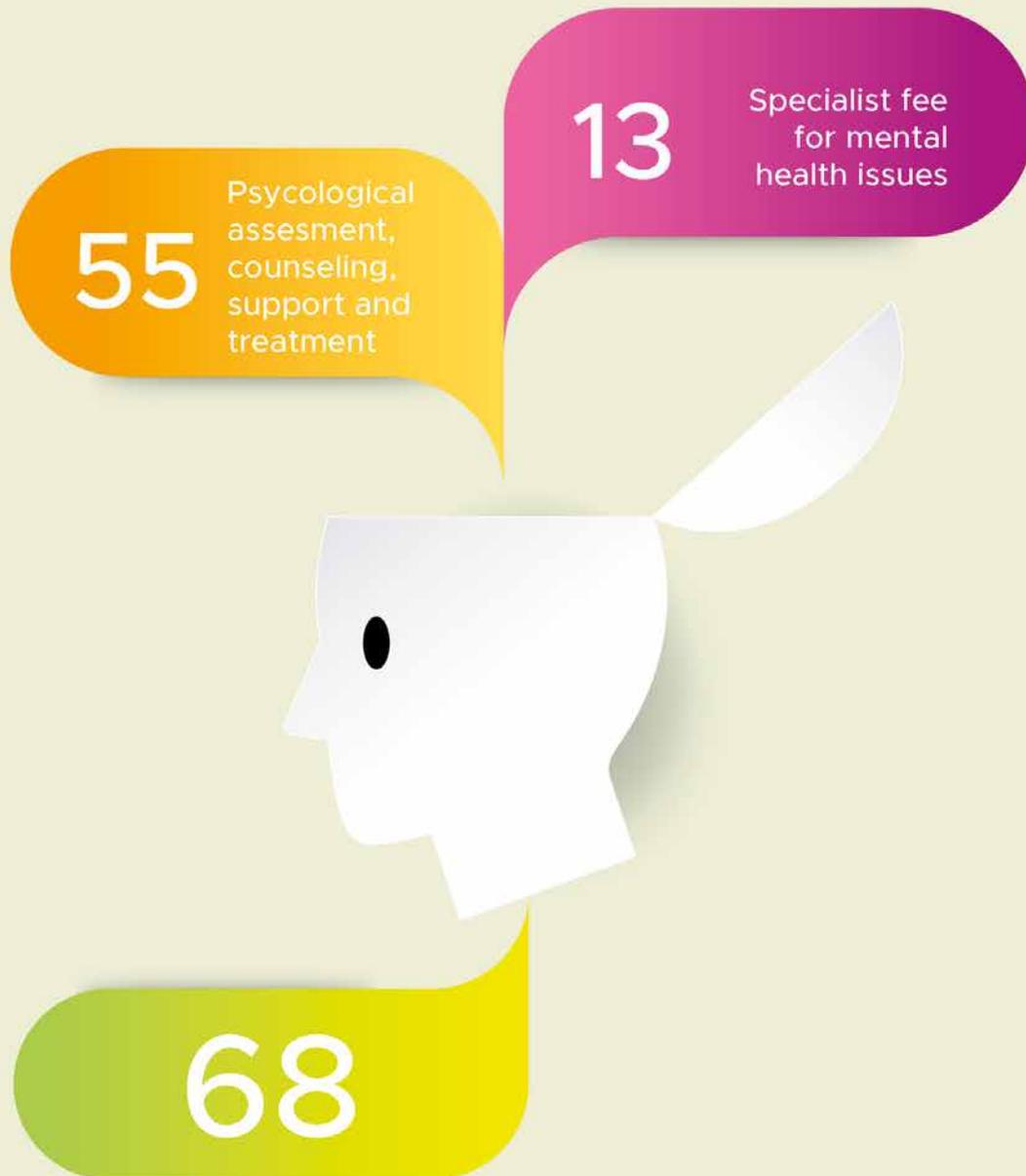


Figure 8. March Against Human Trafficking.

### b. Young adults and students

Examples include anti-trafficking sessions held in three schools in Lezhë and the schools “Kolin Gjoka” and “At’ Shtjefen Gjeçovi” in Kallmet. Additionally, similar training on Social Media and Human Trafficking was conducted in Tropojë.

## THERAPY AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT



### c. General Public

During this reporting period MWL staff participated in three public marches. The first march was organized by the Anti – Trafficking National Coordinator to raise awareness for the annual European Anti-Trafficking Day on 18 October. Local awareness raising activities were organized in other ASCs to mark the day. Six MWL staff also participated in a march celebrating International Women’s Day. In Shkoder, Lezhë and Rreshen, our staff joined local activities as active members of the organizational committees. Finally, the International Day of Prayer and Reflection against Human Trafficking was marked together with the URAT Network on the commemoration of Saint Bakhita.



Figure 9. International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking.

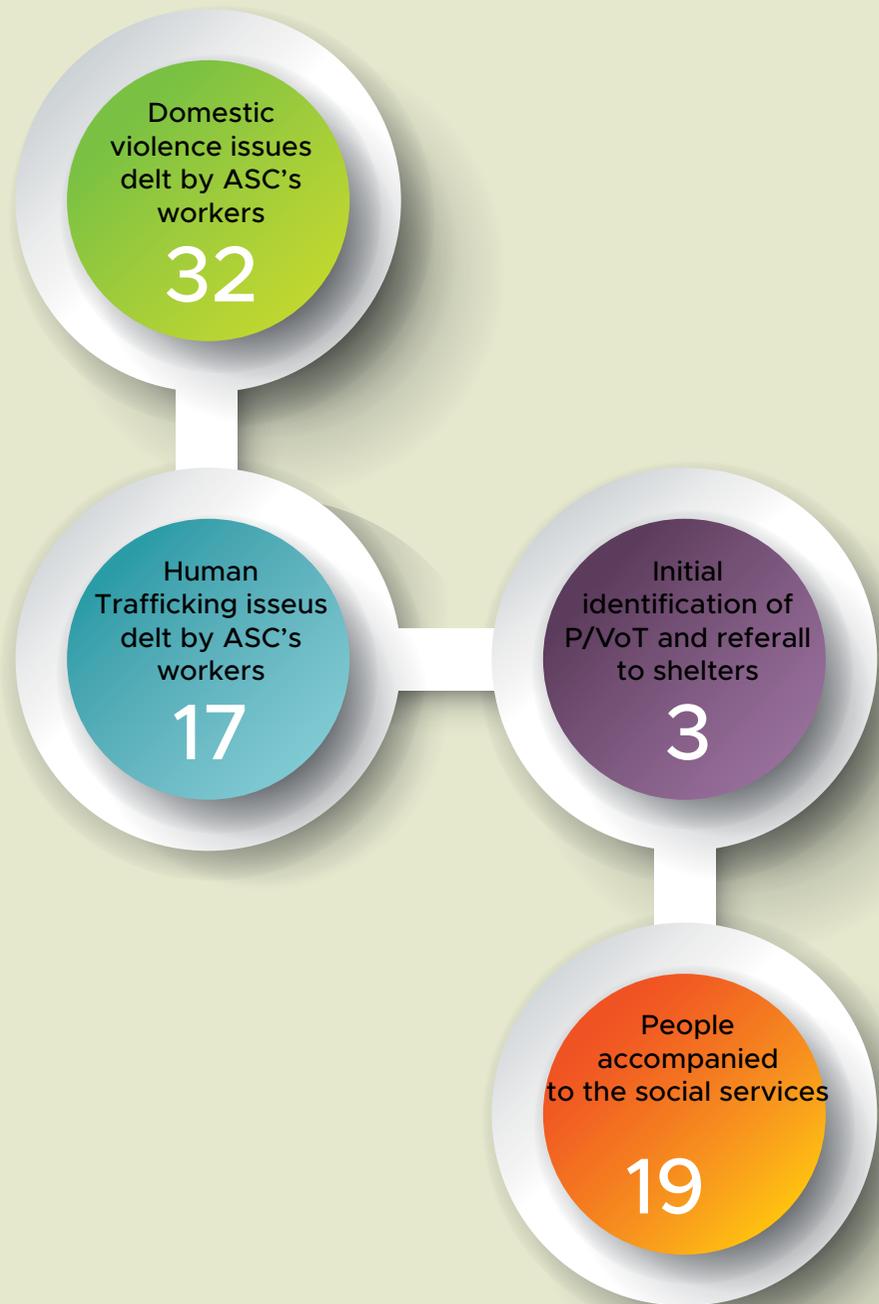
### d. Women

Examples include the training “Domestic Violence and the Role of Women to Fight Against It” at the MWL ASC Shkoder and trainings on positive parenting in Tropoje.

## HEALTH SUPPORT AND MEDICAL TREATMENT

Supporting individuals’ access to medical treatment and support services remains an important aspect of the work conducted through the ASCs throughout the country. In total, 76 people benefited from these services and were able to access health support and medical treatment. Of these, 4 individuals received vital support in having surgical procedures performed. In Tropojë, 40 individuals received prescription glasses as part of a campaign targeting the residents of the region, while 32 others received support in securing prescription medication and medical examinations. MWL ASC workers

## DIRECT ASSISTANCE FOR SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



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play an essential role by setting appointments, accompanying patients and providing emotional support throughout the treatment period and beyond.

### COUNSELLING, THERAPY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

During this reporting period, a total of 68 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, 13 of these 36 individuals received online support services through our collaboration with the Medaille Trust in the UK.

Although the other ASCs throughout the country are not currently staffed with resident psychologists, they nonetheless provide essential mental health services. Next to referral services, they are able to provide financial support for treatment for those in need. For example, the MWL ASC Shkoder referred 26 individuals for assessment and support during this period, while the MWL ASC Lezhë and MWL ASC Tropjë each referred 3 persons.

On the 9th of March, Albania declared the lockdown due to COVID19 pandemic. The MWL ASC Tirana continued to provide psychological support for quarantined individuals to protect themselves and others by switching all face to face sessions to an on-line format. This transition also allowed for the two psychologists of the ASC Tirana to provide online emergency psychological support to individuals in all areas of Albania. This support consists of tools and techniques to manage stress and anxiety related to the pandemic and the homebound, frustration, fears, boredom.

### DIRECT ASSISTANCE FOR SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Direct assistance for survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence continued to be administered successfully through the network of MWL ASCs through the country. During this period, 32 cases of domestic violence were referred to our ASC centres resulting in individuals receiving the necessary care and follow up services. At the MWL ASC Tirana, 3 initial cases of victims or potential victims of trafficking were identified according to the foundation's SOPs. Members of the MWL ASC Tirana also produced 3 reports of reference for human trafficking survivors as part of the asylum-seeking process for 4 individuals in the UK. Throughout the country, 17 human trafficking



issues were dealt with by MWL ASC members. Of these cases, 16 were registered in Tirana and a single case identified in Tropojë.

**SHELTERING**

During this reporting period, the foundation provided temporary sheltering for 32 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 the unwillingness of the persons in need to be housed in a shelter. Additionally, MWL facilitated sheltering for people whose homes were rendered uninhabitable as a result of the earthquake.

**LEGAL ASSISTANCE**

Through the MWL ASCs 19 individuals have received free legal assistance and referrals to other partner organizations which also provide legal counsel free of charge. Cases are followed closely and supported by staff members in the MWL ASCs in Tirana, Lezhë, Saranda, Tropojë and Shkoder.



**ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ACTIVITIES AND MWL SOCIAL BUSINESS**

**EMPLOYMENT INTERCESSION, REFERRAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING GUIDANCE**

The sixth MWL ASC in our network, the MWL ASC Lushnjë, currently functions mainly as a youth centre coaching 10 young adults through its employment program. During November, the ad hoc coordinator of the MWL ASC Lushnjë worked closely with the local employment office and church representatives to identify and recruit 10 youth for participation in the program. Currently, 5 young women and 5 young men from communities surrounding Lushnjë are on the path towards employment by commencing their vocational studies. The MWL ASC Lushnjë now joins two other MWL ASCs in facilitating young adults' transition to employment and a viable career. Through their programs, the MWL ASC Lezhë supports youth's access to vocational training in Rreshen, while the MWL ASC Shkoder works with 10 young men and 10 young women between the ages of 18 and 25 to gain a vocational degree.

This program has proved to be a great success. Since its inception in 2015, an average of 60% of each year's cohort secures employment after completing their vocational training. Based on the great value this program delivers, commitment to the program remains high despite the temporary closure of all vocational training centres throughout the country. Trainees and program staff both equally await the reopening of centres once pandemic related restrictions have been lifted.

The foundation's employment and training support are not solely limited to vocational training for youth through these three ASCs. Other ASCs are also engaged in activities that target employment as an essential means for the economic and personal empowerment of the people they serve. To date, 72 individuals have been provided with employment and vocational training assistance through the active involvement of all the MSL ASCs operating in the country.

**VEGETABLE SEEDS FOR RURAL FAMILIES IN NEED**

In collaboration with Food Bank Albania, the MWL ASCs of Saranda, Shkoder and Tropojë distributed boxes of vegetable seeds for 60 families residing in remote rural areas. This initiative is a simple investment which yields high impacts in contributing to the food security of rural families in need. The assistance was well received by the families, and we hope these seeds bare many fruits in the future.

## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ACTIVITIES

72

Employment intercession, referral  
and vocational training guidance

26

Social business beneficiaries

60

Vegatable seeds (donated from  
Food Bank Albania) distribution to  
families

158



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### MWL SOCIAL BUSINESS

In this reporting period the MWL Foundation was active in operating two social businesses, one located in Kallmet and second in Tropojë.

The social business model in Kallmet takes the form of a tailor shop providing vocational and professional training to 5 women employed part-time. Training goals during this period focused on building the women's expertise in improving product quality while reducing costs and production time. The attainment of this goal was greatly supported by 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. Additionally, Mary Ward Spain sponsored the women's training in professional cutting, sewing machine operation and new model crafting techniques. The results of these capacity trainings 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 Tropojë twenty 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 Centre Skills. Working together, the two organisations conducted 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 through the excellent cooperation between the MWL Foundation and the Municipality of Tropojë. We are grateful to the municipality for generously donating a prime, rent-free location for the new sales point.

In addition to focusing on training and skills development, an important goal shared by both businesses was an increase in sales and revenue. This was to be achieved through expanding the volume of business with existing clients while securing new clients and customers. Securing new orders from existing customers proved to be a successful strategy. For example, increased orders for fleece were placed by MW Spain. Other important business partners include: Mrizi i Zanave, which orders bags and other products from the workshop in Kallmet; uniforms for food workers and cooks via the "Rogacionistet" School in Lezhë, as well as the "Shen Jozefi Punetor" School in Rreshen; and orders for school uniforms placed by the "Scuola Italiana a Tirana".

International networking and new customer acquisition also played a role in achieving



the goal of expanding the customer base for both businesses. An agreement was made between the Kallmet workshop and the Secret Sisterhood, an Australian foundation led by Jacquie Love that supports women's empowerment. Selling jewellery and other products via their online store, the Secret Sisterhood has placed orders for reusable and environmentally friendly tote cotton bags to be produced by the business in Kallmet.

Despite these notable successes in the first quarter, the effects of the global COVID-19 outbreak posed significant challenges for us in growing and maintaining the operations of these two social businesses. We remain hopeful and optimistic that our operations will resume quickly once pandemic related restrictions have been eased. This period of forced closure has allowed us the opportunity to cultivate our 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 option to be considered.

We hope to see you soon in one of our shops under the banner of "Our Products Change Lives".

## MWL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

### FOLK AND TOURISTIC PRIDE PROJECT IN LEZHË

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 Lezhë. During the eight-month project between June 2019 and January 2020, three main project objectives were pursued.

In order to increase citizen engagement in their communities, meetings and trainings were organized with students and pupils. In total, 10 schools participated in various sporting activities and 29 students organized local celebrations based on their concepts, ideas and hard work. These are now hoped to become local traditions in their respective communities.

As the second goal, a classroom in the local school in Gjader (Lezhë region) was re-purposed 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 Lezhë were organized 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. Not only a showcase for local traditions, but such celebrations also help stimulate an appreciation of the rich cultural heritage and diversity of Albania as a whole. By supporting an appreciation of the wealth of experience in their communities, these activities are also considered a preventive measure against migration by cultivating a sense of hope and pride in living in their own country.

### 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 supporting the creation of the necessary value system and democratisation of education. In order to achieve this goal, the project sets out 3 components outlined below.

During the initial stage of the project, the primary focus was on securing stakeholder buy-in for the project among members of the MWL Board of Education and regional authorities of the ministry of education. Considerable time and deliberation were re-



quired to explain the project objectives, secure support and decide on schools where service-learning projects would take place. Although important milestones were met in implementing this project, the COVID-19 induced shutdown of the country resulted in activities having to be suspended for the time being.

Researching the perceived causes of unethical behaviour and corruption in the education system in Albania comprise the first component. To this end, a series of meetings and exchanges took place to draft the Terms of Reference (ToR) and determine the technical criteria for the realization of the research. Board members actively contributed their expertise by expressing their ideas and recommendations on how to design the research to most adequately capture data concerning aspects of corruption in the education system.

To conduct the study a third-party research company was required. In the end, the research company ACER was chosen. The competitive bidding process took longer than expected for two reasons. First, the research addresses a sensitive topic not warmly embraced by the government and ministry of education. Despite some resistance, MWL has remained sharply focused on addressing this topic positively and constructively.

Secondly, budget considerations posed a second hurdle for the project. According to ACER, the proposed project scope would quickly consume the available budget. As a response, MWL and the Board of Education agreed to conduct the research through an online questionnaire shared among members of the target and focus groups. In the



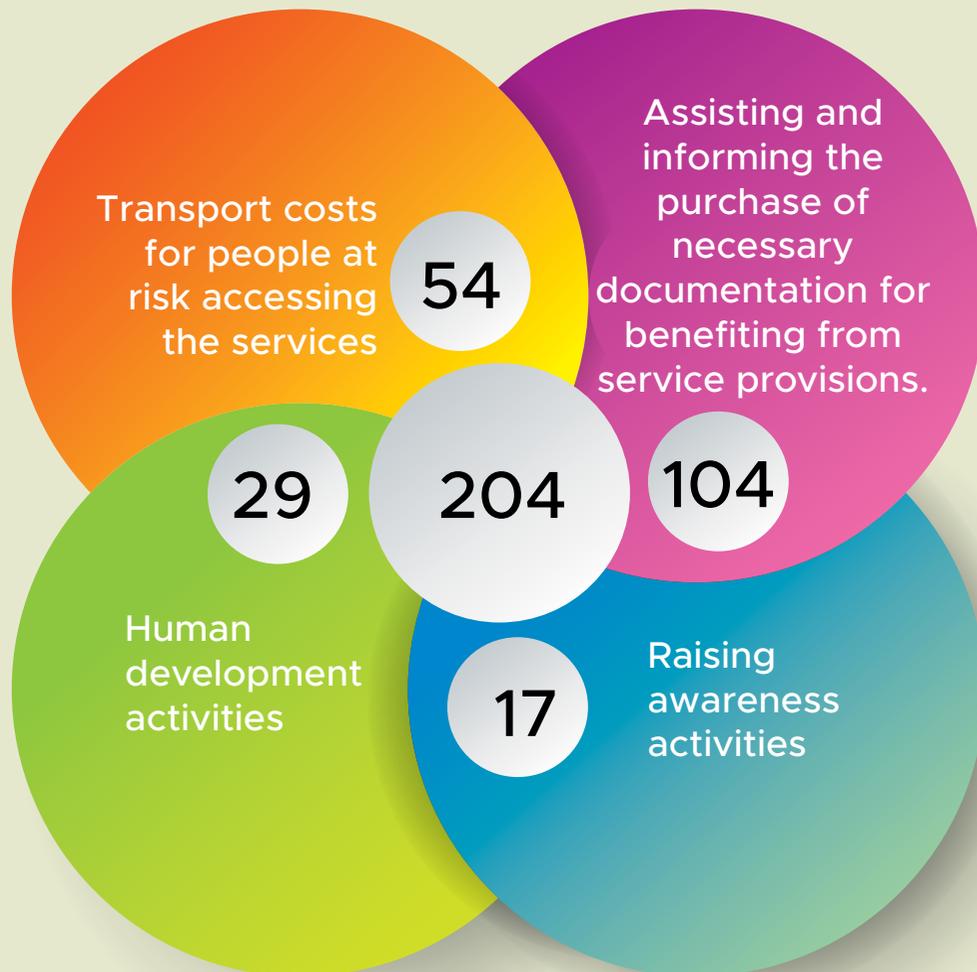
end, the agreement was signed and ACER proceeded with the research as specified in the contract terms.

The second component foresees trainings in ethics for teachers throughout the entire country based on the findings of the research which identified causes for the lack of perceived ethics in Albania's education system. To implement such training, an agreement was signed with the Northern Regional Department of Albania which secured the support of the ministry of education authorities in having teachers attend the training. With the training module finalized and ministerial support secured, 2 training sessions were conducted before COVID-19 restrictions took effect. Four more districts are awaiting training as soon as schools are reopened.

The final component of the project uses the methodology of service-learning to raise the capacities of teachers, students and parents in increasing civic responsibility and ethical practices in the education system. To date, 63 teaching staff and local stakeholders have been trained in the methodology, and a quarter of those trained are now actively engaged in providing support to the implementation of service-learning actions undertaken by students and community members. Moreover, students in four schools across 2 regions have received service-learning training. As a result, over 300 students actively participated in 9 service-learning activities identified and led by students themselves. Through organizing these service-learning projects, youth gain a better understanding of the meaning of community and the importance of being an active citizen in their school and community.



## ADVICE AND REFERRALS WORK



## CHALLENGES:

The main challenges we faced are linked with the COVID 19 situation:

- **Lack of full assessments for families in need:** Due to pandemic 19, we have faced difficulties in assessing the families in need who are seeking help because face to face meetings and family visits were avoided.
- **Online Learning for pupils and students:** Many of our clients, who are pupils or students that are living in poor conditions, could not access online learning, because they do not have a smartphone, computer, tablets and internet at home.
- **Online Counselling and Therapy:** Since our clients are vulnerable and poor, some of them do not own a smartphone or computers in order to develop online sessions.
- **Services for the elderly, patients with disabilities, people at risk of life:** Some of our clients, who are elderly and those with chronic underlying conditions or at risk of life were not allowed to leave their home. Some of them did not have relatives nearby or abroad to take care of them. It is a stressing situation since a lot of families have members abroad and the Albanian government has prohibited the return of its citizens back to their country. In collaboration with the municipality, we have been providing and delivering services needed at their home.
- **Lack of funds:** Covid-19 after the Earthquake in Albania: Earthquake happened in November 2019 in Albania caused damaged buildings, material damages and psychological consequences in many people as well. Many funds of the institutions and Ngo's focused on reconstruction/rebuilding of the damaged buildings and support families in need with food packages and other necessary services, affected by the earthquake. After the earthquake, the pandemic Covid-19 has affected even more the economy.
- **Public Transport:** Since most of our clients live away from the centre of the city or in rural areas, they cannot access some services, even the basic services.
- **Limitation of move:** One challenge was the limitation of the move and the use of vehicles only at certain hours of the day. This has been solved in collaboration with the municipality when the distribution of packages has taken place.
- **National Emergency Services:** Due to the current situation of the Pandemic 19, mostly Ambulance Service and sometimes Police became extremely busy due to the huge amount of calls from the citizens. Therefore, people are told to make calls when they are having concrete and serious problems. This affects even the most vulnerable, cases suffering domestic violence, gender-based violence and these facing exploitation



and human trafficking. Staying at home with the abuser is unsafe. Therefore, they need a rapid response from their respective services. MWL in collaboration with other Ngo's that support domestic violence and human trafficking cases, continue offering legal advice, psychological support, as well as reporting situations of violence and exploitation.

- **Accessing other Public Health Services:** Since the main focus during this time is the prevention of the spread of the virus that caused Covid-19, treatment and cure of the positive confirmed cases, other Public Health Services such as surgical interventions, medical visits, dental services are closed indefinitely. These services offer direct response only for emergency cases. Health care has been provided by consultations through messages or phone calls. Even though, this is no access for all people in need. It seems that another solution might be accessing the services at private hospitals. As the services at private hospitals cost much, many cases/ASC clients cannot afford them.

- **The waiting list of people seeking for help:** According to the criteria that the municipalities have set up in relation with the target group providing food packages, many cases/ASC clients are not benefiting those emergency packages from the municipality, since their economic aid is interrupted before the spread of the virus that causes Covid-19. MWL in collaboration with Food Bank and other Ngo's have been supporting those cases with food packages and hygiene items.

- **Permit Leave Registration:** According to the orders from Albanian government the people had to apply for a permit leave to buy food, medications or have an emergency, some of our clients have difficulties in accomplishing the registration procedure. MWL ASC has been supporting those clients constantly who are facing these difficulties.

We should live in hope and keep going the work and the mission, in a new way. We must catch up with the activities suspended by the pandemic lockdown and also think about and support our beneficiaries in an after covid19 recovery.



**Orientation for the upcoming six months:**

- Creating new opportunities for the development of joint and cross border applications with Medaille Trust (UK) and the University of St. Mary's. Both initiatives will develop and increase the MWL's expertise and reputation.
- Capacity building programme for the Staff of MWL in the TEAL Methodology
- The Groucho Club Gala Dinner – An UK fundraising Event for MWL
- At least 20 Applications will be sent to funding bodies in order to establish the sustainability of MWL's Programmes
- UN Anti-trafficking Day campaigns
- Advice and Service centre programmes
- Research on the causes of unethical behaviour and Corruption in 3 areas of Albania
- Service Learning mini-projects in Lezha and Tropoja with Youngsters
- Summers Camps for youth & children in Saranda, Tirana and Tropoja

# INTERIM REPORT

OCTOBER 2019 – MARCH 2020

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