



Albanian Mission Against Human Trafficking

# **Annual** REPORT

# 20 23

January - December



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**January 2023 – December 2023**



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## ► CONTENT

Foreword	7
Key Changes Achieved	10
Advice and Service Centre Approach	13
Economic Empowerment Approach	26
Civic Education Approach	35
Monitoring and Evaluation	45
Operational Leader & MWL Communications Report	45
Sustainability Measures	48
Conclusion	50



## ► FOREWORD FROM THE MWL STAFF AND MWL BOARD MEMBERS

Mary Ward Loreto Staff and Board Members express their gratitude to the many benefactors and collaborators who have become partners in this mission. We would like to say ‘THANK YOU’ to all of you, knowing that without you this Mary Ward Loreto mission would have been impossible.

2023 leaves the MWL staff with a profound sense of hope and purpose. As you read through this report, you will embark on a journey of reflection, celebration, and renewed commitment to the MWL mission. The achievements listed below are a testimony to the extraordinary impact collectively made in addressing human trafficking, exploitation, and vulnerability.

In 2023 MWL has undergone remarkable qualitative changes that underscore the transformative nature of the interventions made during these twelve months. These changes go beyond numbers and statistics; they represent profound shifts in mindset, behaviours, and community dynamics.

Through the unwavering support of benefactors, supporters and collaborators in every capacity, including the house of prayer, which upholds the mission of MWL, the staff have witnessed:

- Survivors of human trafficking and vulnerable young people experiencing a profound shift in their self-perception and confidence. Through vocational training, psychosocial support, and empowerment initiatives, individuals have emerged with a renewed sense of self-worth, a belief in their own capacity, and the confidence to take charge of their lives.
- MWL’s awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts have fostered a significant change in community attitudes and perceptions. By engaging influential individuals and stakeholders, MWL has successfully challenged stereotypes, dispelled misconceptions, and increased awareness of the issues of human trafficking and exploitation.

- Communities at risk have demonstrated enhanced resilience as a result of the interventions of MWL. By equipping community members with the knowledge to identify and respond to potential risks, MWL has empowered them to collectively protect themselves and their peers from exploitation and trafficking.
- Collaboration with various stakeholders, including local authorities, civil society organizations, and community leaders, has resulted in strengthened partnerships that transcend project boundaries. These partnerships have demonstrated the potential for collective action and sustainable change beyond our project's lifespan.
- Through advocacy campaigns and engagement with influencers, MWL has instigated changes in policies and regulations that directly impact vulnerable individuals and survivors.
- Survivors of human trafficking and vulnerable youth have been empowered to become advocates and leaders within their communities. This qualitative shift showcases the success in nurturing leadership skills, enabling beneficiaries to speak out against exploitation, share their experiences, and inspire others to seek support.
- Beneficiaries now view a broader array of employment options, enabling them to aspire to professions that were once considered unattainable.
- MWL foundation has fostered a culture of support, where survivors, vulnerable young people, and communities feel safe to share their experiences, seek assistance, and collaborate in combating exploitation.

These qualitative changes demonstrate the profound impact of MWL's collective efforts. They remind the foundation members that by empowering individuals, raising awareness, advocating for change, and fostering collaboration, MWL has the power to effect lasting change in the lives of those we serve.

MWL would also like to take this moment to express deep appreciation to Ana Stakaj who has been an exceptional member of staff since its foundation over ten years. For the last four years Ana was also a member of the Executive Team as CEO alongside Artan Toska, the Finance leader and Pjeter Tanushaj, the Operations leader. Together

this team and for two years of this time, including Gazmir Memaj, as Program leader, steered the MWL Foundation through many shifts and changes and which have led the staff to achieve such excellence today. In September, 2023, Ana Stakaj moved on from this role and has taken up a new post as the Albanian Country Manager for the Medaille Trust. MWL wishes her great success as she forges new paths in this entrepreneurial role. We thank Pjeter Tanishaj and Artan Toska for the vital roles they played in the mission of MWL throughout these years.

MWL Albania would like to emphasise the sterling work of MWL UK and to thank them for their exceptional dedication to fundraising and for helping to sustain the mission in Albania throughout 2023. Moreover, MWL offers sincere thanks to the many individual donors who have generously given of themselves to support our mission. Your dedication to the cause of combating human trafficking and exploitation is a beacon of hope for those served by MWL. Together, we will continue our journey, creating lasting change, and making our world a safer and more equitable place for all.

## ► KEY CHANGES ACHIEVED: ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Several key aspects have played a crucial role in enhancing the organization's skills, professionalism, and effectiveness in addressing human trafficking, exploitation, and vulnerability:

- **Professional Supervision:** The provision of professional supervision has been pivotal in supporting staff members dealing with complex and often emotionally challenging cases. Regular supervision sessions have not only ensured the well-being of staff but also equipped them with strategies to manage the emotional toll of their work, maintain boundaries, and provide quality support to beneficiaries.
- **Strategic Planning:** The project's emphasis on strategic planning has allowed the implementing organization to develop a clear roadmap for its interventions. This planning has fostered a more systematic and targeted approach, enabling the organization to allocate resources effectively and achieve specific outcomes. Thank you to the excellent support given by a professional volunteer in this field throughout 2023
- **Communication Plan:** The development and implementation of a comprehensive communication plan has improved the organization's ability to convey its mission, objectives, and impact to various stakeholders. This enhanced communication has not only strengthened the organization's reputation but also facilitated partnerships and collaborations. Once again we include in this acknowledgment a truly professional volunteer who has been advising the MWL team on website development since the beginning of the Foundation. MWL is grateful for this amazing support.
- **ERSTE Foundation Trainings:** Participation in ERSTE Foundation trainings has provided staff with valuable skills in areas such as project management, advocacy, and leadership. These trainings have empowered staff members to take on greater responsibilities, contribute to strategic decision-making, and drive positive change within the organization.

- **Understanding Behavioural Patterns:** The project's approach to understanding the behavioural patterns of victims and survivors has equipped staff with insights into the mind-set and experiences of those they serve. This understanding enables staff to provide more empathetic and effective support, building trust and rapport with beneficiaries.
- **Coping Strategies for Challenging Environments:** Training staff to manage the effects of working in challenging and sometimes corrupt environments has been crucial. The organization has invested in building staff resilience, teaching coping mechanisms, and providing tools to navigate ethical dilemmas while maintaining their commitment to values and ethics.
- **Relevance of Staff Behaviour:** By emphasizing that staff behaviour should mirror the respectful and empathetic approach they advocate for beneficiaries, the organization has ensured that its staff embodies the values they promote. This consistency between message and action enhances the organization's credibility and effectiveness.
- **Ethics in a Society is affected by Corruption:** The project's focus on ethics, in the context of a society facing problems of corruption, has enabled staff to navigate challenges with integrity. Training staff to uphold ethical standards even in challenging environments reinforces the organization's commitment to its mission and enhances its reputation.

**Ongoing Learning and Adaptation:** The organization's commitment to continuous learning and adaptation has fostered a culture of growth. Regular feedback loops, evaluations, and capacity-building initiatives ensure that staff members are equipped to address emerging challenges and seize new opportunities. Strategic planning, communications planning, personal capacity training was experienced over the year by all staff both individually and collectively thanks to pro bono trainers to whom we are hugely grateful. Without these wonderful people MWL would not have made such an amazing leap into achieving new dreams for 2024 – 2026.

In summary, the MWL Foundation's comprehensive approach to capacity-building has not only enhanced the skills and professionalism

of the implementing organization but also equipped staff members to navigate complex situations, maintain ethical standards, and deliver impactful support. The combination of supervision, training, strategic planning, and fostering an organizational culture that aligns with the project's values, based on Mary Ward's values of Freedom, Justice, Sincerity and Joy, has empowered the organization to thrive in its mission to combat human trafficking and exploitation.

### **DELIVERY OF THE MWL 3 STEPS PROGRAMME:**

(The STEPS are the 3 Approaches used by MWL to work in the field to combat human trafficking.)

## A ADVICE AND SERVICE CENTRES APPROACH:

**Service provision for vulnerable youth and families. This service which accompanies clients according to their expressed needs, has been administered in the context of social, psychological, legal and economic advice and then, as appropriate, offering to refer the client to existing services in the country and ensuring each person is kept safe throughout this process.**

Mary Ward Loreto (MWL) diligently carries forward its mission to implement **holistic interventions designed to combat human trafficking and facilitate the reintegration of survivors.** These endeavours are thoughtfully enhanced through coordinated interventions within strategic partnerships and networks, ensuring that vulnerable individuals and families, particularly beneficiaries of the ASC centres, receive comprehensive and integrated services. While the ASC centres are strategically dispersed across six regions within Albania, they extend their reach to encompass remote beneficiaries via telephone communication and also offer facilitated transportation for access to services. MWL's dynamic network extends to areas where formal and private services are scarce, thereby addressing critical gaps in support structures.

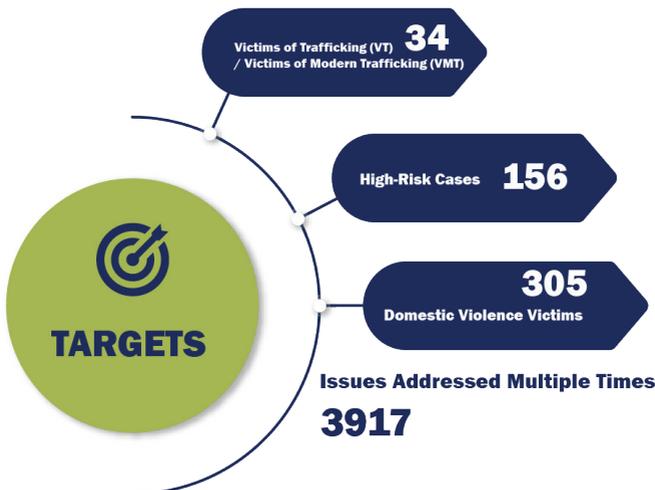
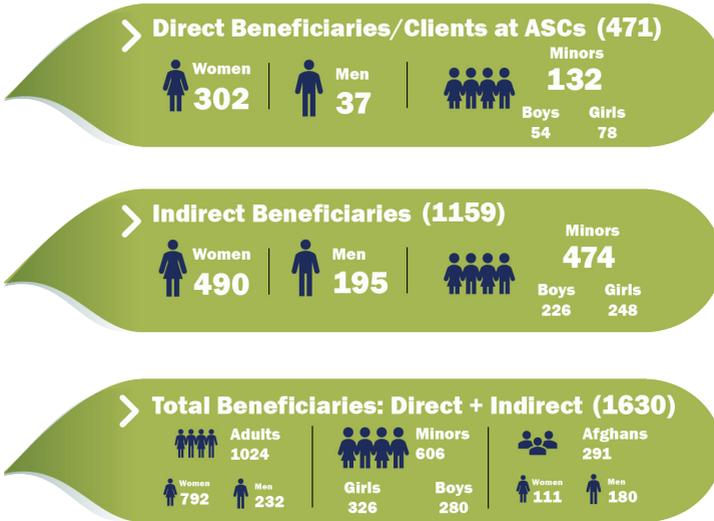


A central tenet of our approach is the reduction of vulnerabilities to trafficking, domestic violence (DV), and gender-based violence (GBV). This is achieved through multifaceted strategies encompassing aid, support, and empowerment of survivors. Heightened awareness campaigns, the refinement of institutional practices, and the orchestration of coordinated responses, within both local and national networks, collectively contribute to the overarching goal of minimizing vulnerabilities.

MWL remains committed to its mission of providing comprehensive and sustained support to individuals at risk and those affected by these pressing issues. Through the continued implementation of STEPS, we strive to foster resilient communities and contribute to broader efforts to combat human trafficking and its associated challenges.

## Client Support and Referral Services

During the reporting period, *Is a number needed here?* beneficiaries accessed the services offered by MWL's Advice and Service Centres (ASCs). With a meticulous focus on a **victim-centred approach and trauma informed care**, the MWL ASCs delivered comprehensive advice, referral, and support. This service provision is tailored to individual needs, as determined by thorough needs assessments carried out within the ASCs. A hallmark of our approach has been a seamless coordination with relevant stakeholders to ensure a robust and coordinated response.



**SERVICES PROVIDED 1751**

977 DIRECT SERVICES FROM MWL

+ 441 SERVICES THROUGH REFERRALS FROM PARTNERS

**Advice, Referral, Accompaniment to Services****977****Psychological Support****117  
Clients****Online Counselling for Albanian Victims  
sheltered at the Medaille Trust Shelters****7****Reports & Support Letters Written for  
court proceedings for the Albanian survivors****5****Health Care and Medical Support****87****Legal Aid****65****Emergency Response, Sheltering, and Housing****148****Food and Hygiene Sets****296****Job Search and Employment Facilitation****149****Personal and Economic Empowerment Programs****137**

## Key Highlights of the programme:

- Our comprehensive array of services underscores our commitment to not only addressing immediate needs but also contributing to the long-term well-being and safety of the most vulnerable within our communities. By engaging in meticulous identification, targeted advice, and strategic referrals, we endeavour to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.
- The MWL ASCs play a crucial role in the identification of potential/victims of trafficking, gender-based violence, and any kind of abuse towards vulnerable individuals, leading to accurate response and support services. By being accessible to everyone, the ASC provides space and trust for beneficiaries including those who do not identify/label themselves with the status of victim, and avoid approaching other services specified for victims due to various valid reasons. The inclusivity of the programme ensures that the projects reach more beneficiaries and at an earlier stage of risk and danger.
- Our commitment to psychological counselling and legal aid reflects our holistic approach to addressing vulnerabilities and empowering survivors. These efforts embody our dedication to fostering resilience and equipping individuals with the tools they need to navigate their paths towards safety, recovery, and self-sufficiency.
- Our Emergency Response and Sheltering Program epitomizes MWL's unwavering commitment to immediate action and holistic care. Through our concerted efforts, we aim to provide a lifeline to those facing distressing circumstances, ensuring their safety, well-being, and access to essential services. As we continue to respond to emergencies

and support survivors, we remain dedicated to our mission of promoting resilience, recovery, and empowerment. The Emergency Food and Medicines Packages initiative exemplifies

- MWL's commitment to immediate action and comprehensive support. Through our collective efforts, we can provide essential relief to families grappling with challenging circumstances, serving as a beacon of hope in times of adversity. As we continue this vital work, we remain steadfast in our mission to foster resilience, alleviate suffering, and empower individuals and families in their journey towards brighter horizons.
- Implementation of "Rise Up Clubs" based on the EmpowerFull Model, are shaped in such a way as to give dignity and value as human beings to the survivors who are members of the club, and who deserve to have their potential valued and developed. Milestones in breaking out of the violence cycle include interactive training sessions on women's rights, life skills and soft skills, the creation of new habits, changing the "victim narrative", becoming goal-oriented and entering the labour market for the survivors.
- In conclusion, the group sessions conducted at ASCs underscore MWL's multifaceted approach to empowerment and gender equality. By fostering knowledge-sharing, awareness-raising, and active participation, we strive to empower women to be agents of change within their communities. Through collaboration, advocacy, and the amplification of women's voices, we are taking significant strides towards a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient society.

## ► EMPOWERING AFGHANI ASYLUM SEEKERS PROJECT:

Mary Ward Loreto (MWL) extended its commitment this year to providing essential support to Afghani asylum seekers. This section of the report details the continuous efforts undertaken during the initial half of the project year to engage, assist, and empower this vulnerable demographic.

MWL's dedication to working with Afghani asylum seekers has persisted throughout the initial phase of the project year. Amidst the challenges and uncertainties faced by this community, MWL's unwavering commitment shines through.

**Reaching Out to the Vulnerable:** Of the 900 refugees sheltered in the camps in Golem and Shengjin, MWL has successfully reached 291 individuals. These engagements have gone beyond mere interactions; they have encompassed needs assessments and the provision of direct services that address critical needs and challenges faced by Afghani asylum seekers. To this end, we have established five focus groups, consisting of 74 men and 42 women, totalling 116 participants. Within these groups, five information sessions have been meticulously designed to shed light on the risks associated with human trafficking. By equipping asylum seekers with awareness and understanding, we empower them to navigate challenges more effectively. This project was funded by the Vatra Psycho-social Centre.

**Immediate Support:** In Saranda, MWL's commitment to immediate assistance manifested itself in the provision of psychological support to 12 Afghani minors. These young individuals, detained by the border police during their crossing from Greece to Albania, received crucial psychological assistance. This intervention not only addresses their immediate needs but underscores MWL's holistic approach to caring for the mental and emotional well-being of vulnerable individuals.

In conclusion, the work with Afghani asylum seekers serves as a poignant reflection of MWL's ethos of compassion, engagement, and empowerment. By extending support to vulnerable people through needs assessments, informative sessions, and psychological assistance, Mary Ward Loreto strives to make a tangible difference in the lives of those seeking refuge. As the foundation continues this journey, it remains dedicated to creating pathways of resilience and empowerment not just to Afghani asylum seekers, but to all refugees and migrants who are referred to Mary Ward Loreto, for care and compassion, fostering in them a brighter future amid the challenges they face on the journey.

## ► STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SERVICES DELIVERY

### Capacity building for service providers

Twenty training sessions, attended by 416 service providers, were carried out during 2023, designed for building capacity in local services and improving the support and protection offered to vulnerable individuals and communities.

16 trainings and workshops on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for identification and assistance to victims of people-trafficking, along with Case Management for gender-based violence victims, have taken place in Lezha, Tirana, Rreshen, and Saranda, with the participation of border police, social services at municipal level, the education system and health care sector, civil societies and the justice system.



### Applying Behavioural Science

MWL in 2023 has been committed to participating in a trial and then incorporating Behavioural Science into capacity building. This methodology encouraged the participants to design services and programmes that take into consideration professional wisdom gained throughout their



experience. In partnership with Ideas42, MWL has been involved in the process of designing evidence-based interventions to improve the response towards human trafficking. Initially, two members of staff have been trained in behavioural design in the MWL programmes. This process has been implemented into programmes by applying the approach through five stages of the intervention. As a result, two trainings with stakeholders were carried out to scale up the impact and improve the outcomes in the fields of anti-trafficking and migrant protection.

### Supporting & enhancing the wellbeing of frontline staff in 3 organizations working with victims and survivors of human trafficking

MWL implemented an innovative project to support frontline workers in their mission to reduce trafficking in human beings, to rescue victims and enable them to thrive. The project has achieved significant and tangible results that have contributed to long-term positive change and impact, particularly in the context of improved services for beneficiaries, including victims and survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence.



- 1. Enhanced Well-being of Frontline Professionals:** The project has effectively improved the well-being of 25 front-line professionals, leading to positive outcomes. Mental health improvements have been achieved by addressing the burdens accumulated over years of demanding work. These professionals have been equipped with strategies to focus on the present, prepare for the future, and address suppressed and untreated traumas. These interventions made use of psychodrama sessions, peer-to-peer supervision, retreats, and training on secondary traumas and burnout prevention. As a result, levels of stress and anxiety in the workplace have decreased, leading to an increase in the quality of social and psychosocial services provided to beneficiaries. Additionally, front liners have

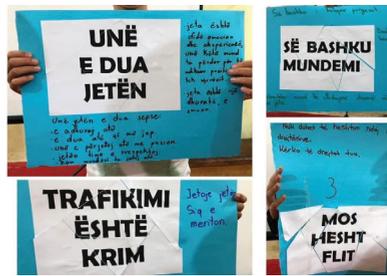
gained a better understanding of themselves, which has translated into increased empathy and commitment to beneficiaries. This has resulted in reduced emotional triggers and projection, ultimately leading to improved responses to individuals in situations of vulnerability and hardship.

- 2. Improved Knowledge and Skills:** The project's focus on experiential learning has allowed participants to master various techniques to manage their own emotions and reactions, as well as those of the beneficiaries. This has led to an overall improvement in the quality of services delivered, as front-line professionals are better equipped to handle complex emotional situations.
- 3. Innovative Approach and Awareness:** The project introduced innovative approaches to staff care that were not previously practised within the participating organizations. This innovative approach has not only improved the well-being of front-line professionals but has also raised awareness about the importance of staff care within the broader context of similar organizations. Furthermore, it has fostered a healthier work environment, promoted innovative practices, and raised awareness about the importance of staff care in similar organizations, ensuring a lasting impact beyond the project's duration.

## ► ADVOCACY AND INFLUENCING MEASURES

MWL continues to be an active member of National Referral Mechanism (NRM), and Anti trafficking Regional Committees & Local Technical Groups (KRAT), by contributing to the protection of and promotion of the rights of victims of trafficking.

In Lezha, Rreshen, & Saranda, MWL is a member of Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRMs) for domestic violence cases, and played a crucial role in providing effective response to victims of domestic and gender-based violence. Besides the direct services provided, MWL continues to work closely with all state institutions aiming to ensure each institution plays its role, as assigned by the law, in order that citizens benefit from decent services. An analysis of the work challenges and successes, addressing human trafficking and gender-based violence issues, was organized. The conclusions of this intervention led to a realisation that some good collaboration does exist among the local mechanisms which address these two phenomena. However, more collaboration and training services were needed for the police sector in particular. One accurate observation was that frequent change of police staff meant that very often possible victims of HT or GBV do not get decent services when they meet with newly appointed untrained police. These officers do not understand what it means to interview with a victim-centred, trauma-informed approach. They have missed out on that training.



As a member of the network United Response in Albania against Trafficking, (URAT), MWL has been involved in the action to raise awareness on July 30<sup>th</sup>, the World Day Against Human Trafficking, about the phenomena of trafficking in human beings and exploitation. In order to spread the message and to reach a wider public, an awareness raising video was produced and launched on social media. In National Anti-trafficking month, an opening event was organized by URAT to raise public awareness of the prevention and fight against human trafficking, with the slogan: “From awareness to action: Join the fight against trafficking”. Present at the activity were representatives from the main public institutions, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education and Sports, young people from high schools in Albania, organisations and representatives of civil society, and the general public.

Campaigns to raise awareness on gender-based violence and people-trafficking were organized locally in collaboration with local institutions. MWL has incorporated a strategy to train and include youngsters into organizing and designing campaigns, to support them in their turn to become agents of change in society.

MWL continues to be a member of the Monitoring Network Against Gender-Based Violence, and stands for advocating for the rights and protection of victims through joint declarations and appeals to government and law enforcement to improve laws and policies in favour of victims.

MWL participated in various surveys to support the efforts of CSOs and networks to identify challenges and opportunities for improved practices in assisting victims of human trafficking and gender based violence, within the country and abroad.

**Civil Society Platform:** MWL is represented at the EU Civil Society Platform Against THB by participating in the online and physical meetings held by the EU Coordinator’s Office. Contributions have been given in the preparation of reports on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings.

**RENATE Network:** One of the MWL staff had a contributing role as RENATE Albania Representative, participating in the Working Board meeting and organizing the elections for the new representative. In addition, the MWL staff member chaired the meetings with the RENATE Albanian group.

MWL contributed to the implementation of “Human and Strategic Development and Healing Processes” a project funded by the Conrad Hilton Foundation and coordinated by the RENATE Core group. The MWL Anti-trafficking Leader carried out the “EmpowerFull” training programme along with 9 survivors, by extending the good practice of the MWL programme to the MWL networks, and reaching out to more survivors for empowerment and leadership.

A project for RENATE in the years 2023 and 2024, is to provide Survivors of Human Trafficking with leadership training. This project is funded by the Conrad Hilton Foundation and coordinated by the RENATE Core group with the contribution of the RENATE Shelter and Safe Houses Task Group.

**ANDANTE Network:** MWL continues to be a member of ANDANTE which is also a member of the Conference of international Non-Governmental Organisations at the Council of Europe, and a MWL staff member is involved in the core group and contributes to planning and organizing events. Two MWL staff attended the ANDANTE Study Days that took place in Germany, with the theme “Interreligious and Inter-Convictional Dialogue from a Woman’s Perspective”. One of the staff is a member of the core group of ANDANTE and was actively engaged in organizing the event, while the chief psychologist of MWL was invited to deliver workshops on “Mindfulness for Building Connections” with the attendees.

**Exchange of knowledge and expertise with UK stakeholders:** MWL has organized and hosted meetings with stakeholders from the UK in order to share knowledge about the Albanian context and the factors that affect human trafficking and illegal migration. In collaboration with ARISE Foundation, MWL arranged with the Home Affairs Committee a meeting with Returnees from illegal migration to the UK/Europe.

With the Medaille Trust, at MWL ASC Tirana, we hosted meetings with the Home Office, Police & Justice representatives from the UK. We shared insights into the situation in Albania regarding human trafficking, illegal migration, and organized crime.

## Enhancing Cultural Competency in Addressing Modern Slavery:

A collaborative research was conducted between Mary Ward Loreto and the Bakhita Centre, St Mary's University, Twickenham, on Slavery, Exploitation, and Abuse. This research employed the concept of cultural competence to investigate the display and comprehension of cultural influence within the modern slavery sector, with a focus on addressing cultural barriers, to shape future policies and practice. It provided a better understanding of cultural barriers in the UK, especially concerning Albanian nationals in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), in order to help in shaping future policies and practices. Within the strategy of this research, the interviews in Albania were conducted by staff at MWL and it also included a qualitative approach to the research through a Shared Learning Event. This was organized in Tirana with stakeholders to discuss and explore insights into Albanian culture and society, and secondly, to use this understanding to prevent trafficking and safeguard vulnerable individuals during risky migration.



## **B THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT APPROACH:**

One of the strategic cornerstones of our mission is to cultivate economic empowerment and entrepreneurial spirit among young people. Through tailored vocational training and the support of youth-owned businesses, we endeavour to not only equip young individuals with essential skills but also provide them with the means to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Our approach is two-fold: first, by offering specialized vocational training that aligns with market demands, we ensure that our youth are well-prepared to enter the workforce. Second, we go beyond employability by fostering a culture of entrepreneurship. We actively encourage and support the establishment of youth-led businesses that cater to community needs, thereby transforming these young individuals into contributors to their local economies. This strategic activity, driven by a vision of sustainable economic growth and empowerment, serves as a powerful pathway towards a future where our youth are not only job-ready, but also poised to shape their own destinies as thriving entrepreneurs.

### **Provision of tailored vocational training and support for the development of youth-owned businesses which offer these services for their communities.**

The Economic Empowerment approach implemented from January to December 2023 has yielded significant progress and impact across multiple fronts. Through tailored vocational training initiatives, we've empowered individuals in various regions, enabling them to pursue careers in fields such as hospitality, organic farming, and culinary arts. In parallel, our support for youth-owned businesses has led to the establishment of 22 new enterprises, coupled with financial stimulus for ten of them, facilitating essential growth. Furthermore, we've bridged the gap between skilled youth and employment opportunities by assisting 10 individuals in securing jobs and fostering productive dialogues between youth and businesses. We've also empowered individuals with knowledge of their contractual rights. Despite these accomplishments, challenges persist for women who, while benefiting from MWL services, face obstacles entering the job market because of childcare responsibilities. We remain dedicated to addressing these challenges, ensuring that economic empowerment reaches even those facing unique hurdles, and facilitating positive change in our communities.



The approach encompasses three primary interventions:

## 1. Tailored Vocational Training:

<b>Lezha</b>	Over the course of the year, six women have been referred and have successfully received certificates in cooking and tourism.
<b>Rreshen</b>	Twelve individuals have received advice and guidance to pursue vocational training and further their studies at the Professional High School of Rreshen, facilitated by the MWL ASC Rreshen worker.
<b>Lushnja</b>	A group of ten young people participated in group activities. Seven of this group actively engaged in vocational training courses in Fier and Lushnja.
<b>Puka</b>	Forty young individuals have received advice and orientation towards vocational training, with ten of them receiving transport reimbursement and essential toolkits after they had successfully completed their vocational training.
<b>Tirana</b>	Twenty individuals have received advice and guidance for job searching and vocational trainings. 6 clients at ASC have attended vocational trainings to gain or to strengthen professional skills.
<b>Saranda</b>	In collaboration with schoolteachers and Employment Office staff in Saranda, career orientation sessions have been organized for 64 students at Hasan Tahsini School.
	12 young people have successfully finished their vocational trainings and 5 are still ongoing.

## 2. Support for Youth-Owned Businesses:

- Twenty-two businesses recently established by young entrepreneurs have been identified in the five areas. Tailored question-and-answer sessions will be organized in each region to provide personalized assistance, addressing their unique needs.
- Ten businesses have been selected and financially supported by the project, with a minimum sum of 500 euros provided. This financial boost has enabled them to purchase necessary equipment or cover essential costs.
- Two women's cooperative groups are receiving support, including training and ongoing assistance, along with materials to enhance their income.
- Four training sessions on entrepreneurship were conducted in Rreshen and Saranda, involving 18 established youth businesses and four startup ideas. Expert guidance is available to them for three months to address real issues and challenges.
- Twenty young people and twelve women have been trained in the use of social media for impactful marketing in Saranda and Puka.

## 3. Bridging Youth and Employment Opportunities:

- Ten individuals in Lezha, Saranda, Rreshen, Lushnja, and Puka have received assistance in job search and employment intermediation, resulting in five of them securing employment.
- A round table discussion was held in Lezha, where 34 young people and four businesses engaged in fruitful discussions, ultimately leading to job offers and realistic requirements from youth.
- Ongoing collaboration with employment offices, local partners and businesses ensures access to existing services for MWL service recipients.
- Four training sessions on contractual rights were developed, involving 45 individuals in Lezha.
- A Work and Study fair was co-organized, allowing 122 young people to participate in collaboration with schools in Saranda, Delvina, Konispol, and the Saranda Employment Office.
- On-the-job training has been offered for three people in Saranda, in collaboration with two local businesses.



## TAILORED VOCATIONAL TRAINING:

### PUKA

**40** young individuals advised on vocational training, with **10** set to receive support upon completion.

### LEZHA

**6** women attending cooking and tourism reception courses.

### RRËSHEN

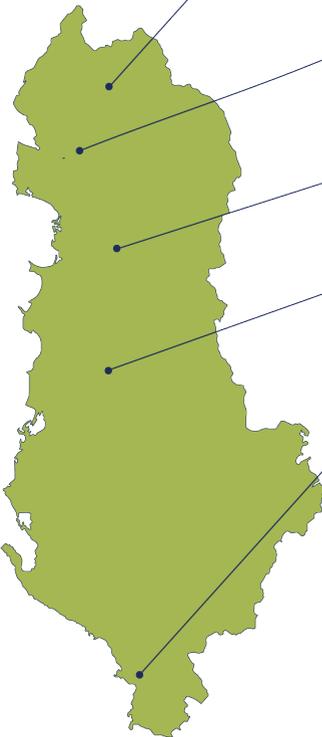
**12** individuals were advised for vocational training and further studies.

### LUSHNJA

**10** young people engaged in vocational training courses.

### SARANDA

**64** students participated in career orientation sessions at Hasan Tahsini School.  
**12** young people have successfully finished their vocational trainings and **5** are still ongoing



## SUPPORT FOR YOUTH-OWNED BUSINESSES:



**22**

RECENTLY ESTABLISHED  
BUSINESSES  
WERE IDENTIFIED.



**10**

BUSINESSES ARE  
FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED  
WITH A MINIMUM OF  
500 EUROS EACH.



**2**

WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE  
GROUPS RECEIVING SUPPORT



**4**

TRAINING SESSIONS  
ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
WERE CONDUCTED.



**20**

YOUNG PEOPLE AND  
**12** WOMEN  
TRAINED IN SOCIAL MEDIA  
MARKETING.

## BRIDGING YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:



**10**

INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED  
IN JOB SEARCH AND EMPLOYMENT  
INTERMEDIATION.



A ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION  
IN LEZHA INVOLVING

**34** YOUNG PEOPLE AND **4** BUSINESSES.



COLLABORATION WITH EMPLOYMENT  
OFFICES AND LOCAL PARTNERS.



**4**

TRAINING SESSIONS  
ON CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS  
WITH **45** PARTICIPANTS.



A WORK AND STUDY  
FAIR INVOLVING  
**122** YOUNG PEOPLE.



PAID WORK EXPERIENCE FOR **3** YOUNG  
PEOPLE IN COLLABORATION  
WITH TWO LOCAL BUSINESSES

## **B “EMPOWERING SURVIVORS: THE RISE UP CLUB INITIATIVE”**

The “Rise Up” Clubs have been successfully established and concluded in Lezha, Rreshen, Tirana, and Saranda, each comprising 30 survivors who are referred to as club members. These clubs are rooted in the EmpowerFull program, aimed at fostering economic empowerment through a series of self-growth and self-confidence-building training sessions tailored to enhance employability.

A standardized training module has been developed to cater to the needs of these four distinct groups, with ASC leaders customizing topics and techniques to align with each group’s specific circumstances. Club members were individually introduced to the program at ASCs, where 15 interactive training sessions were conducted—six in Lezha, four in Rreshen, four in Tirana, and one in Saranda.



In Lezha, club members concurrently engaged in a dressmaking course, with training sessions aligning with their vocational skill development. To provide additional motivation and insights, external speakers, including experienced psychologists and healthcare professionals, were occasionally invited to share their experiences and inspire the women while also working to reshape their narrative from victimhood to empowerment.

One noteworthy achievement of the project is the establishment of a trust-based relationship with the women involved. They now feel comfortable seeking support and expressing their needs, and the project staff proactively refer cases for follow-up, employment, or other necessary assistance.

The implementation of “Rise Up Clubs” based on the EmpowerFull Model stands as a resounding success story. These clubs have effectively restored dignity and value to their members, recognizing them as individuals with immense potential rather than individuals solely in need of basic support. This paradigm shift has not only transformed how service providers view these women but has also altered the self-perception of the club members themselves. For many, it was their first opportunity to focus on themselves, away from traumatic experiences such as divorce and violence. The clubs have also fostered therapeutic elements, including the recognition of shared challenges, altruism, healthy emotional expression, and the cultivation of hope.

Remarkably, in Rreshen and Lezha, there has been a surge of interest among women in the community to participate in the program, prompting local bodies to request its expansion as a result of its exceptional success. This program marks a significant milestone in Rreshen, serving as the first-ever initiative for women who have experienced gender-based violence and human trafficking in the area.

## *Testimonials from members of the Rise Up Clubs:*

*“I have been lucky to be part of trainings and programs, meals and meetings we had together with the women’s group. I received a lot of positivity, kindness, support and love. I am very grateful. Sincerely, Martina.”*

*“It was a great pleasure for me to be in your project. I am very grateful for every meeting I had the chance to attend. I got a lot of information and had the opportunity to make new friends. D.GJ”*

*“The project made me feel more positive and very energetic. I felt joy all this time. It doesn’t happen often in my life to go out and organize with friends. Thank you very much! L.P”*

*“I have gained higher confidence and better communication in public or with groups. A.N”*

*“This program brought colours into my life. Gratefully, Sonia”*



*“ Thank you for bringing back my dignity! I am worthy and deserve to be seen as such!” A.P*

## Key Highlights from the Economic Empowerment Approaches implemented by MWL during this semester:

- **Empowering Survivors:** The initiative has successfully empowered survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking, transforming them from victims to individuals with vast potential.
- **Customized Training:** Tailored vocational training has equipped survivors with essential skills for the labour market, with specialized modules adapted to the unique needs of different survivor groups.
- **Supportive Environment:** The project has fostered a supportive environment where survivors feel comfortable seeking help and support, bridging the gap between their needs and available resources.
- **Expert Guidance:** External speakers, including experienced psychologists and healthcare professionals, have provided valuable insights and motivation to club members, contributing to their personal growth.
- **Community Engagement:** Increased interest and requests for program expansion from local communities highlight the positive impact and recognition of this initiative's success.
- **Mindset Transformation:** Through therapeutic factors, survivors have shifted their self-perception, focusing on their skills and abilities, which has been especially transformative for individuals coming from traumatic backgrounds.
- **Dignity and Value:** The project has not only restored dignity and value to survivors but has also influenced service providers to view them as individuals with significant potential.
- **First in the Region:** The program stands as a pioneering effort in Rreshen, offering crucial support and resources to women victims and survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking.
- **Holistic Empowerment:** The initiative encompasses economic empowerment, personal growth, self-confidence building, and emotional well-being, providing survivors with a comprehensive path to recovery and self-sufficiency.

## C THE CIVIC EDUCATION APPROACH

MWL's Civic Education approach is designed to foster transformation and empower individuals to become active, engaged, and informed citizens. This approach encompasses a range of topics, including Leadership, Community Activism and Volunteerism, Healthy Relationships, Self-Realization, and E-learning methods. It also addresses special topics tailored to the needs and interests of young individuals, such as media literacy and environmental awareness.

Through this approach, MWL engages students who are actively participating in various projects, providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective leaders and advocates within their communities. By promoting civic education, MWL aims to instill a sense of responsibility, active participation, and a commitment to positive change among young individuals, preparing them to contribute positively to society and address the unique challenges of their communities.

### **Service-Learning Initiatives:** **Empowering Youth for Positive Change**

As a fundamental activity for our semester report, we proudly present our Service-Learning (SL) initiatives, an educational approach that seamlessly blends learning objectives with community service, creating a dynamic and practical learning experience while simultaneously addressing vital societal needs. These initiatives have been thoughtfully implemented across four project areas, strategically aligned with the specific needs of both schools and communities.

Our approach involves engaging the young people within our youth clubs, empowering them to identify pressing issues and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to address these concerns effectively. Topics covered include voluntarism, values, and leadership, with a focus on nurturing the growth of ethical, empathetic, and socially conscious young leaders.

Through SL methodology, our dedicated youth have spearheaded and sustained four impactful initiatives, each following a structured process of planning, reflection, implementation, follow-up, and celebration.

These stages not only facilitate the acquisition of essential life skills but also nurture critical thinking and community engagement.

The transformative impact of these initiatives lies in their hands-on nature, enabling young people to learn by doing—a proven and effective approach to education. The young people themselves have identified issues within their schools and have taken proactive steps to address them. They've actively participated in drafting policies and regulations relevant to their age group and have been instrumental in training their peers on these new guidelines, which have been implemented by school management.

Collaboration has been at the heart of our SL approach. We've worked closely with reliable community partners who share our commitment to promoting values and integrity. As a result, 457 children have directly benefited from these SL projects, while 147 teachers, parents, and local partners have contributed to their success.

Our efforts have led to confident and empowered young individuals taking control of their lives, actively participating in their communities, and demonstrating leadership in solving real-world problems. These initiatives are now poised to compete for the 4th Regional Service-Learning Award, scheduled for October 2023, where they will vie for recognition among over 100 schools from Central and Eastern Europe.

These projects serve as a testament to the transformative power of youth engagement, service-learning and collaboration

## LEZHA

NO.	TRAINING TOPIC	NR OF PARTICIPANTS/ BENEFICIARIES STUDENTS	TEACHERS/ PARTNERS
1	SL METHODOLOGY	25	4
2	YOUTH LEADERSHIP	24	
3	STUDENTS - TEACHERS RELATIONS	7	15
4	ART, HANDCRAFTS, LOCAL CULTURE	17	2
5	STUDY VISIT	12	2
6	SL CELEBRATION EVENT	22	14
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>107</b>	<b>37</b>

## RRËSHEN

NO.	TRAINING TOPIC	NR OF PARTICIPANTS/ BENEFICIARIES STUDENTS	TEACHERS/ PARTNERS
1	SL METHODOLOGY	42	8 TEACHERS    30 PARENTS
2	ONLINE SAFETY	42	2
3	ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP / VOLUNTARISM	42	7 TEACHERS/PARENTS
4	CELEBRATION EVENT	120	25 TEACHERS    30 PARENTS
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>252</b>	<b>100</b>

## SARANDA

NO.	TRAINING TOPIC	NR OF PARTICIPANTS/ BENEFICIARIES STUDENTS	TEACHERS/ PARTNERS
1	SL METHODOLOGY	16	4
2	BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK OF YOUTH COUNCIL	23	1
3	PROJECT WRITING SKILLS	11	2
4	YOUTH AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP	16	3
5	SERVICE LEARNING (METHODOLOGY)	12	3
6	SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE	20	6
TOTAL		98	19

## Broad-Based Organizing: Empowering Youth through Collaborative Initiatives

At MWL, we have successfully embraced and consistently applied the Broad-Based Organizing methodology with confidence. Through this strategic approach, our dedicated staff has facilitated the formation of a youth group within a high vocational school. This group identified a pressing need: the absence of a comprehensive code of conduct addressing child protection and youth security issues among school students.

The culmination of their efforts resulted in the creation of a comprehensive manual that serves not only their school but also remains open for sharing with other educational institutions. This manual aims to enhance child safety from every perspective, including addressing the increasing challenges posed by online exploitation of children, cyberbullying and various emerging phenomena, particularly in the post-covid 19 era marked by widespread internet use among youth.

At MWL, we place great emphasis on collaborative partnerships, and we often play a pivotal role within the communities we serve. In collaboration with local church partners, we have initiated and supported summer camps catering to children aged 7 to 15. Recognizing the scarcity of opportunities for children during the summer months in these communities, we organized three summer camps in remote areas. These camps provided valuable education on environmental conservation, fostered empathy, and engaged children in enriching and enjoyable activities. Importantly, they offered a lifeline to many vulnerable children from disadvantaged families, granting them access to a nurturing and educational environment during the summer break.

LEZHA		BROAD-BASED ORGANISING	
NO.	TRAINING TOPIC	NR OF PARTICIPANTS/ BENEFICIARIES STUDENTS	TEACHERS/ PARTNERS
1	BBO METHODOLOGY	15	1
2	GENDER EQUALITY	20	
3	ETHICS CODE OF CONDUCT	37	2
4	LOBYING	14	2
5	LEADERSHIP	26	
6	STUDY VISIT IN Tirane safe guarding policies for youth	14	4
7	Presentation of students with new code of conduct	102	5
8	Presentation of code of ethics and code of conduct for the students	28	16
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>30</b>

## RRĚSHEN

## BROAD-BASED ORGANISING

NO.	TRAINING TOPIC	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS/ BENEFICIARIES PARENTS, WOMEN AND MEN	TEACHERS/ PARTNERS
1	BBO METHODOLOGY		18
2	MARCH ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS	25	5
3	ORGANIZATION OF SUMMER CAMP WITH CHILDREN	300	15
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>325</b>	<b>20</b>

## SUMMER CAMPS

NO.	DISTRICT	TRAINING TOPIC	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS/ BENEFICIARIES PARENTS, WOMEN AND MEN	TEACHERS/ PARTNERS
1	LEZHË	Human values, continents, empathy	300	15
2	TROPOJË		150	7
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>450</b>	<b>22</b>

## ASC-Y Project: Empowering Youth for Civic Engagement in Saranda

The ASC-Y project is dedicated to the establishment of the Local Youth Council in Saranda, aiming to assemble a group of no less than 15 dynamic individuals, comprising 7 young men and 8 young women. This council is envisioned as the vanguard of a sustained initiative within the Municipality of Saranda, aligning with the provisions of Law number 75/2019, aptly titled “for Youth.”

The Youth members of the Local Youth Council already are playing a pivotal role in shaping policies and serving as an advisory body for all things dedicated to youth.

Moreover, they will act as catalysts for civic education and community driven initiatives extending their influence on peers through the consultation of the Youth Action Plan priorities, service learning projects and various training programs and activities.

To ensure the success of this initiative, the project has offered comprehensive support, encompassing diverse approaches, training modules, coaching, mentoring, and budgetary assistance. The project objective is not only to establish a functional structure but also to cultivate a thriving and dynamic one.

MWL has played an instrumental role in supporting the formation of the Local Youth Council by equipping selected young leaders with the skills needed to draft, implement, and monitor policies undertaken by the municipality. These policies are designed to foster a safer and more opportunity-rich future, with a strong emphasis on promoting democratic practices, particularly among the youth. Our overarching aim is to empower young individuals to actively participate in policies and decision-making processes at all levels of government, thus contributing to a more inclusive and vibrant



community. MWL feels proud to have contributed to the drafting of the first action Plan of the Local Youth Council of Saranda which is being approved by the Municipality Council and also budgeted for implementation.

## Service Learning sustainability and partnerships

After the realization and celebration of SL initiatives with schools and local partners, the staff of MWL has initiated collaboration with 4 new schools in order to expand the implementation of SL methodology with new partner schools, and stakeholders.

The implementation of SL methodology is ongoing, with the introduction of teaching staff and students to SL methodology. Follow up will include all the steps of the methodology, such as Investigation, Preparation, Action, Reflection, Demonstration and Evaluation/Celebration in order to implement quality projects to the benefit of youth and community.



Four new schools have been identified as new partners for 2024 and also a new youth group has been trained as youth leaders through the partnership with the Central and Eastern Network of Service Learning. This group is a mixed group consisting of members from the Local Youth Council and also teachers coming from various schools in Lezhe region, which expands the network of people engaging in the implementation of SL initiatives.

Six youngsters who attended a summer camp in Prizren Kosovo have committed to lead a group of youngsters to implement a SL initiative. This is a big step in shifting the leadership role of implementing Service-Learning initiatives from project staff and teaching staff to the local youth.

Youngsters are at the stage of engaging other youngsters in the project and preparing and identifying new SL initiatives.

The 3rd Service Learning Regional Award took place in December 2023. Albania competed with 4 projects, of which one reached the finals and was included among the most significant projects. MWL continues to collaborate, support and benefit from this SL regional partnership network, and aims to engage in the implementation of cross border projects aiming to further strengthen the network but also to expand the number of schools that implement service-learning projects.

## Civic Education Approach Highlights:

- **Comprehensive Learning:** Our Civic Education approach offers a holistic learning experience, covering various critical topics such as Leadership, Community Activism, Volunteerism, Healthy Relationships, and Self-Realization.
- **Youth-Centred:** The approach actively engages youth within our youth clubs, allowing them to take ownership of identifying and addressing societal issues that matter most to them.
- **Specialized Topics:** Beyond standard topics, we empower youth to explore specialized areas, including media literacy and environmental awareness, adapting to their unique project needs.
- **Structured Methodology:** Through the Service Learning (SL) methodology, we guide young people in planning, implementing, and reflecting on projects, thus fostering crucial life skills and critical thinking.
- **Youth-Led Initiatives:** Young people have taken charge by identifying problems and leading projects aimed at changing fundamental aspects of their schools, including the drafting of policies and regulations relevant to their age group.
- **Community Collaboration:** We actively collaborate with reliable community partners who share our commitment to promoting values and integrity.
- **Positive Impact:** Our initiatives have directly engaged 457 students, and 147 parents, and teachers, ensuring the broader community is involved in the learning process.
- **Transformational Change:** By focusing on experiential learning and community engagement, our approach empowers confident and active young leaders capable of solving real-world problems.
- **Regional Recognition:** These projects compete at the Regional Service-Learning Award, as a testament to their transformative power and impact within Central and Eastern Europe.

## ► MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Mary Ward Loreto's unwavering commitment to maintaining exemplary standards is evidenced through the meticulous establishment of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework for this project. To facilitate effective monitoring, a series of actions was taken.

Regular monitoring visits were conducted in project areas where MWL operates, enabling first hand assessment of project activities, beneficiary engagement, and progress evaluation. Biannual narrative reports were diligently prepared to provide comprehensive insights into project accomplishments, challenges, and outcomes. A centralized database was created to streamline data collection and management from advice and service centres across the four regions. Tailored monitoring and evaluation tools were designed to gather relevant data points specific to the project's unique aspects. The MWL team actively monitored project implementation during the year, ensuring alignment with established standards. Quarterly evaluation meetings are convened to assess progress and address evolving needs and challenges. Finally, annual reporting encompassed narrative, financial, and M&E reporting, promoting transparency and accountability to project stakeholders and donors. In conclusion, this vigilant monitoring and evaluation framework reflects MWL's dedication to upholding project excellence, fostering continuous safeguarding norms for all protagonists engaged in the programs

### MWL Operation Leader

It is impossible for all of this impressive action in the field to be implemented without the constant support of the MWL Operations and Finance leaders. The MWL mission, implemented by the operations leader, is done in accordance with the requests made by the MWL staff in the field, according to the monthly programs and the tasks requested to ensure the high professional level of these programs.

One of the main tasks is to make it possible for the MWL staff to function logistically/operationally.

The important daily tasks of the operation leader include also some extraordinary challenges such as ensuring offices are found when MWL

staff move to different areas in a region. It also involves guaranteeing all equipment and personnel are in place as each activity is realised in a given area.

Due to the high performance level of MWL's operation leader other NGO's such as the Medaille Trust, and RENATE have requested these services in 2023, in their major conference and trainings across Europe or in Albania itself. This can bring in extra income for the mission of MWL and for this MWL is grateful.

The operation leader is also available for many volunteering activities, when requested by networks such as URAT, in national awareness-raising campaigns, especially when the UNGift box is being used in these campaigns.

It is also important to note the invaluable work which takes place in the field, where the operations leader is working with other members of the MWL staff, such as the close work with young people when working in regions such as Puke, Rreshen, Lushnje and Fush Arres, where there is excellent cooperation and interaction with young people. The MWL Operation Leader has always been deeply engaged with the MWL youth project helping with the purchase of tool kits, (including a special purchase of toolkits for two young women who were setting up business together), plus organizing meetings and events which have been part of this program.

Another extra responsibility for the operations leader has been the follow up to two women's groups who are now in business themselves. Constant contact has been guaranteed with these groups

## MWL Communications Person

The Social Media and website person for Mary Ward Loreto, is dedicated to combating human trafficking. In this role she takes care of MWL's online presence and engagement strategies. She is responsible for creating content across various social media platforms and crafting informative and empathetic messages that raise awareness about the issue of Human Trafficking and the organization's mission. The communications person ensures a user-friendly experience that conveys the urgency and importance of the mission. She regularly updates content, shares educational resources, and information about

the initiatives taken by the MWL team which inspire and inform the readers. Collaborating with the team, the communications person leverages the power of digital communication to amplify the impact of the mission. By staying informed about the latest trends and insights, she aims to maximize the outreach and engage diverse audiences, ultimately contributing to the shared goal of preventing human trafficking and supporting survivors.

## ► SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES: ENSURING LASTING IMPACT

Considering the program's impressive implementation and achievements, a comprehensive set of sustainability measures has been carefully devised to secure the enduring impact and effectiveness of the project. These measures are thoughtfully designed to empower the program's beneficiaries, fortify partnerships, and cultivate a self-sustaining ecosystem.

**Skills Enhancement and Entrepreneurship:** Central to sustained economic empowerment is a focus on skills enhancement and entrepreneurship. The program will provide advanced training and mentorship aligned with local market demands, equipping beneficiaries with market-relevant skills to establish businesses, contribute to the local economy, and serve as inspirational models for others.

**Strengthening Local Partnerships:** Collaborative partnerships with local government agencies, private sector entities, and community organizations are pivotal for long-term sustainability. These partnerships will tap into existing resources, networks, and expertise, ensuring a more efficient and sustainable delivery of services.

**Integration with Existing Systems:** Integrating the program's initiatives with existing social and economic systems is paramount for longevity. Alignment with national and regional development strategies, policies, and frameworks will institutionalize program interventions and secure ongoing support from relevant authorities.

**Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer:** Building the capacity of local stakeholders, including community leaders, educators, and government officials, is a sustainable strategy. By imparting skills and knowledge, the program will foster a culture of empowerment, ensuring that the community continues to benefit post-program.

**Peer Learning and Community Networks:** Establishing peer learning networks among beneficiaries creates a support system extending beyond the program's timeline. Encouraging beneficiaries to mentor and guide each other, fosters a sense of belonging and ensures knowledge and empowerment continue to circulate within the community.

**Financial Literacy and Inclusion:** Equipping beneficiaries with financial literacy skills and facilitating their access to financial services promotes sustainable economic growth. Understanding financial management empowers beneficiaries to make informed decisions about their businesses and personal finances, contributing to long-term financial independence.

**Monitoring and Evaluation for Impact:** Implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to measure outcomes and impact provides evidence of the program's success. Demonstrating tangible results attracts continued support from donors, stakeholders, and partners, ensuring the sustainability of funding and resources.

**Empowerment of Local Leadership:** Empowering local leaders and community members to take ownership of program initiatives is essential. Nurturing local leadership allows the program to transition smoothly into a locally driven endeavour, ensuring sustainability even in the absence of external support.

Incorporating these sustainability measures into the program's design and implementation not only amplifies its impact but also establishes the foundation for enduring positive change. By fostering self-reliance, community engagement, and lasting partnerships, the program becomes a catalyst for long-term transformation and empowerment.

## ► CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as we close the year 2023, we are reminded of the profound impact that MWL and its dedicated supporters have made in the fight against human trafficking, exploitation, and vulnerability. The qualitative changes we have witnessed underscore the transformative nature of our interventions and affirm our commitment to creating lasting change.

Change is almost always good for organisations, including MWL. In the last two months of the year the process was set in motion for the appointment of a new CEO for Mary Ward Loreto. It was a careful process involving four teams in the deliberations before a final decision was made. The four teams were firstly the short-listing team and as there were 48 high level candidates, it was important for this team to give equal opportunity through a fair scoring process. The MWL team leaders became the second team facilitating the shortlisted candidates task to evaluate, over a fortnight, one of the three programme approaches used by MWL to implement the mission against human trafficking. The staff were the third team who conducted their own interviews with the same candidates over a small buffet prior to the more formal interviews. Finally, when the fourth team, the interviewing panel, came together with the spokesperson for the staff who were not on the interviewing panel, there was a total consensus of staff and interview panel in the chosen candidate. MWL and all board members congratulate Redion Qirjazi on his success in this process. Redion takes up this new post as CEO with MWL on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2024. Both staff and all of you reading this report join with us in wishing Redion Qirjazi great success as he prepares to take up this new role. The website [www.marywardloreto.net](http://www.marywardloreto.net) and the FB marywardloreto has published a recorded interview, conducted by Julie Etchingham (A patron of MWL), with Redion, giving more details on his wishes and dreams as he takes up this important role. We thank Anthony Kelly, a film and media journalist, for his support in this venture.

We extend our renewed heartfelt thanks to our invaluable donors, partners, and supporters, whose unwavering belief in the MWL mission has fuelled our progress. Your generosity has not only empowered individuals but has also inspired entire communities to stand against exploitation and embrace a future filled with hope and opportunity.

As we move forward, let us carry with us the stories of enhanced self-empowerment, shifted mindsets, collective resilience, strengthened partnerships, advocacy-led policy changes, nurtured leadership, transformed career opportunities, and a culture of support. Let these stories serve as a reminder of what is possible when we unite in our mission.

MWL is deeply grateful to each and every one of you for your dedication, your compassion, and your unwavering support. Together, we will continue to transform lives, challenge injustice, and build a world where every individual is empowered to thrive. The MWL team is energised knowing that you remain alongside and are an integral part of this journey. Together we look forward to the countless positive changes that lie ahead.

### **Mary Ward Loreto Team – Albania. February 2024**

**Aferdita Gjoni:** Civic Education Leader

**Artan Toska:** Finance Leader

**Gazmir Memaj:** Programme Leader

**Genc Gjoci:** Rreshen ASC Centre Leader

**Irena Kraja:** Anti Trafficking leader

**Lorena Dizdari:** Saranda ASC Centre Leader

**Pjeter Tanushaj:** Operations Leader

**Imelda Poole IBVM:** Acting CEO

# Annual Report

January 2023 – December 2023

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Albanian Mission Against Human Trafficking

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