


# MARY WARD LORETO

## ANNUAL REPORT

October 2017 - September 2018




Albanian Mission Against Human Trafficking

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# MWL Umbrella

Mary Ward Loreto Foundation has experienced a year of growth and expansion unlike we have ever seen before. Closing the chapter on our 5th year of work in Albania, we find ourselves in a position of gratitude and enthusiasm to do more. Our mission of combating human trafficking has lead us to much progress and the momentum of the success of MWL, in collaboration with many beneficiaries and partners, is springing us into the next year with conviction, dedication, and more connections than we have ever made in the history of the Foundation.

Anti-Trafficking work is nothing without the networks that fuel it. We understand this as an organization because we experience the strength of the impact as a member of many of those networks, both nationally and internationally.

To make a difference and create systemic change in this work, partnerships and collaboration with others are vital. We are proud to continue our partnership with RENATE (Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation), URAT (The United Response Against Trafficking), Vatra, Different and Equal, (both of the latter working for the Rehabilitation of Trafficked Victims), and Shkej – Little Angels Project for Roma Street Children. Within Albania we are also in partnership and collaboration with many other organizations; Peace Corps, DevAID, Roma Organisation, YUNUS Social Business, Terres de Hommes, Swiss Contact and the Sue Ryder Foundation. These partnerships are vital to our mission and enable us to help the most vulnerable within Albania and across Europe.

Our partnerships are not limited to NGO's as we also work closely with Government Ministries, Municipalities, and Universities: The Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Anti Trafficking, Municipality of Lezhe, Municipality of Tropoja, the United States Embassy, ICITAP, and 3 Albanian Universities are among a few.



## ALBANIAN MISSION AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING



We continuously fight for a seat at the table because when Mary Ward Loreto Foundation is present in networks, meetings, and roundtables, we speak for the most vulnerable and the most dependent on systemic change. In this past year, a member of our staff has joined the National Youth Committee, representing our work and our advocacy for the youth of Albania and the organization has joined a parliamentary committee to work with cross-border government officials in the southern Balkans and in the UK to work together against human trafficking. MWL has also been added to The National Referral Mechanism for Anti-Trafficking; this opens many doors for us to continue providing direct action, raise awareness, advocate for the most vulnerable, and campaign for systemic social change.

One of these campaigns is the UN Gift Box Campaign. This year, the UN Gift box travelled to Vlore, and Kosovo for awareness raising of human trafficking in the Balkans, made possible by URAT and the staff of MWL. In light of this expansion of our reach, MWL has begun to frame our work around the Sustainable Development Goals as a strategy. These are long term goals and milestones that help shape our work to combat human trafficking, in particular the Elimination of Poverty. Aligning our strategy with those of the United Nations leads to collaboration and partnerships that produce change and better achieve our mission.

### **Grassroots Work:**

The grassroots work of MWL in the Women, Men, Youth, Prison, and Education Projects has continued in this year to be discerned, implemented, and assessed for impact and relevance. Assessing the field allows us to understand the needs, the issues, and problems, recognizing when projects need to change or be re-directed. We are constantly learning and adjusting our work to do the most good and make the most progress toward our mission; ending human trafficking.

All projects are continuously monitored, allowing us to keep the people of Albania, especially those at the periphery, at the center of our work. This year 151 cases of families in crisis have been addressed from our office, the church, and on the street. Through our direct action, 12 victims of trafficking, men and women, have been referred to us.





## **MWL Staff Development:**

One of the values of the staff of MWL is constant self-improvement and professional development. This year, the staff of MWL has had over 100 meetings, have benefited from a Fundraising Training financed by ARISE - an anti-trafficking partnership, a Refugee and Safe Migration Training with UNHCR, a Website and Marketing Training, and a Staff Training Week in April with an emphasis in psychodrama and yoga. Staff professional development is made a top priority, to ensure that our mission is being accomplished at every level of the work. Staff trainings are held monthly and in various areas of study; among them this year were Participative Leadership and Data Collection. In addition to these meetings and trainings have been Board Meetings for MWL, Meetings for the MWL Education Board, RENATE meetings, Events Management training for the Logistics Manager achieved with Distinction, online, from a London Based College, Qualification training for the Finance Officer, Supervision qualification for one of the psychologists and the final graduation of another psychologist in a four year training, with an Israeli Foundation, in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Individual trainings for other staff members, mainly through the support of the European, Erste Training Foundation, have been on-going and all encourage us toward greater productivity. The number of meetings held by MWL and participated in by our staff through the course of the year is remarkable, and our growth in influence is a testament to that. We use every opportunity we can to build a bridge and create partnerships that will help our mission.

## **Organization Development:**

In the spirit of more clearly communicating our mission, we have changed our logo to more clearly define MWL as the “Mission in Albania Against Human Trafficking.” We have also reorganized our organagram, again making our mission and our accomplishment of this more clear and concentrated. Also this year we published MWL’s Safeguarding Policy and adhere to it strictly. In this past year, one of the most exciting outcomes and catalysts for our growth and reach is the acceptance of the honour of the MBE given to the President of MWL and RENATE, Imelda Poole.

This is simply a brief overview of the year we have had here at Mary Ward Loreto Foundation. The future of our work is challenging, but we are confident in our ability to continue to eliminate human trafficking by Empowering through Justice, Freedom, and Sincerity.



**Albanian Mission Against Human Trafficking**

# MWL Women Project

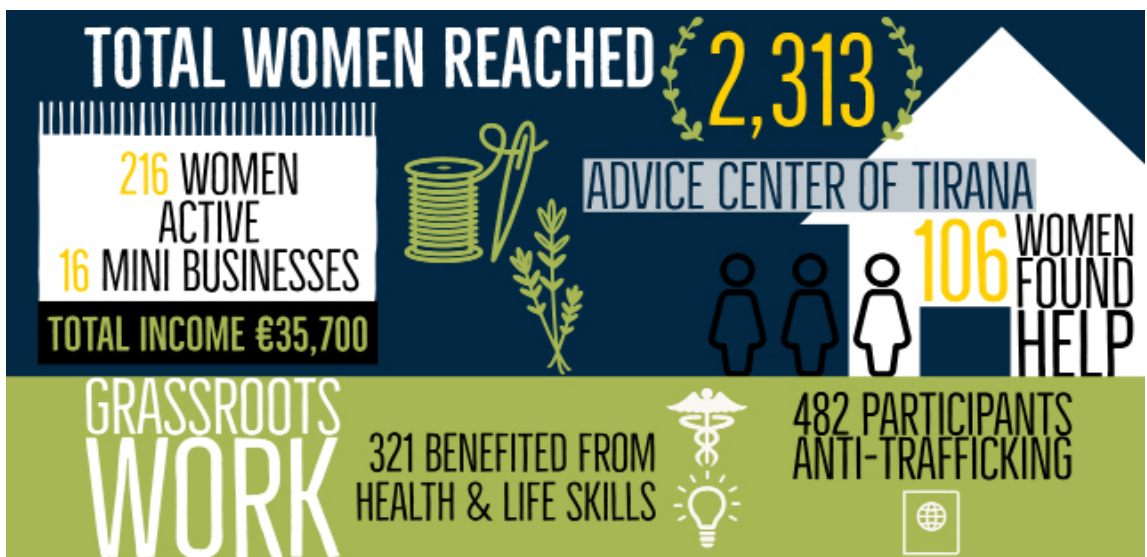
*The Women's Project at Mary Ward Loreto aims to end trafficking and exploitation of women and girls. In the spirit of Mary Ward, we answer these vast and systemic problems with a holistic approach that addresses human development at every level and to every human need.*

Women and girls make up the majority of sex trafficking victims. The MWL Women's Project provides assistance to women and girls in communities, to be protected through inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable activities. The project seeks to achieve this goal through training, coaching, assisting, and empowering the women and girls to have access to rights and to have the freedom to reach their full potential. This year 2,313 women and girls participated in the MWL Women's Project in the 6 regions we work in across Albania.

## Grassroots Work:

Poverty is one of the root causes of slavery and human trafficking. Situations of desperation are created when families and parents struggle to put food on the table, access health care, or afford school fees to educate their children. Offers to travel abroad in the hopes of a better life become more tempting for parents and children alike. Many cases of human trafficking begin with an individual looking for decent work. By addressing this factor and investing in creating economic opportunities over the next years, we would address one of the main vulnerabilities that place people at risk to trafficking in the first place.

This year, 614 participants were part of human trafficking awareness raising trainings. 321 women have been involved in our Life Skills, and Health programmes across Albania. This programme gives lifesaving help, holistic education, and empowerment to the women and their families.



## Broad Based Organizing:

Trainings across Albania this year have produced necessary fruit for the women and their communities. In the areas of Shendelli and Hot I Ri, the women leaders are more engaged than ever and are serving as models for the community. Petitions and formal requests are being made and already the municipalities have responded and delivered change.

*Here are a few examples:*

- Students in Raja, Tropoja have been excluded from education due to the difficulty of transportation. Students would have to walk 4 hours a day to school, making them vulnerable to harsh weather conditions and trafficking. Thanks to these women leaders, 31 students are now able to attend school due to a means of transportation being secured.
- In Shendelli, after 2 years of community organizing with the municipality, a kindergarten is being built for their children.
- The community group in Hot I Ri is advocating and negotiating for a crossroad to be built in their village to decrease accidents.

## Human Development:

In the human development activities during this year 1,168 participants were involved. This programme has included the identification of needs, advice, referrals, training, socializing activities to consolidate community groups, and support for women in crisis. 205 women participated in the activities of cognitive techniques for assessing, improving and maintaining the women's self-esteem. These activities have brought a positive impact on a personal level, and also in the group dynamics by increasing their socializing level and team building.





Additionally, by training and coaching the local institutions, the women and their communities will have a good chance to have access to better services. In the light of this, the programme offered capacity building to 112 Staff from statutory services and education for strengthening the means of implementation for sustainable development this year.

## **Health:**

If a woman is engaged in agriculture, the chances are very high that she is doing it informally. This effectively excludes her from social services and health benefits in general. MWLW believes through its experience in providing women with health support to enable them to build a new life in which they feel safe and able to contribute to their families and communities as full and active citizens. Taking support to women in their communities and working with specialist health providers, we enable women to find their feet in a new society and gain employment, meaningful opportunities, and an understanding of how to support their children's schooling and seek a better future for them and their families.

In the programme for ensuring healthy lives and well-being for women, 321 participants have been involved.

The training on palliative care has been conducted and 90 care providers were trained. capacity building training have been made with 63 doctors and nurses in providing adequate assistance to the people in need for health services. 20 teachers have been trained in First Aid.

## **Advice Center of Tirana (ACT):**

Since opening, the ACT center has proven to be a much-needed piece that was once missing from society. The vision for this center was to have a welcoming place for women and girls in need to come to for aid and services in the city of Tirana. This year, 106 women and girls have approached the centre addressing 316 issues and received the services needed at the Advice Centre of Tirana by our skilled staff and referral network. Many women refer multiple cases of domestic violence, mental health care, asylum seeking, legal aid, and even needing simple access to social services. ACT is having an impact in reducing the vulnerability and the risk of human trafficking through increased access to statutory and non-statutory services. This ongoing work is implemented through informing, referring, and empowering the women to seek for their rights, protection and support by respective service providers.

47 women and girls have received mental health support in the center and through online counseling to cope with domestic abuse, post trauma from human trafficking, and other psychological distresses. Emergency packages with food, clothing, and medicines have been distributed to 39 women in need and 10 women have been placed into social housing and accommodation.

9 women have been supported with health care access, 13 have been referred to free legal aid, and 7 women seeking asylum in other European countries or being deported back to Albania after rejection of their asylum claim, have been consulted with and given information regarding safe procedures and opportunities for support. In the light of reintegration and economic empowerment, 43 women have been referred to the labour market, and 10 of them have been trained for self-employment.

A large part of seeking truth and justice is holding criminals accountable by seeking legal aid and law enforcement. 57 women and girls, who are victims of domestic violence, have received emotional support, informed of their rights, and referred to law enforcement. 13 women were referred to and received legal aid. 5 girls who were potential victims of trafficking and 2 girls who were victims of sexual assault received awareness raising and counselling sessions and were referred to law enforcement. Due to the effectivity of this work, the key social worker at ACT was chosen by ICITAP to participate in a joint training in the USA, with the Albanian police, on the subject of "Coping with Sex Crime." Following this prestigious training the MWL worker has been part of a training team working with the police in Albania on the same topic. The ACT center has directly intervened in the lives of 5 potential victims of trafficking through awareness raising, counseling, and referral to law enforcement.

Since 2013 Mary Ward Loreto Foundation has been in partnership with the Medaille Trust who runs shelters for victims of trafficking in human beings in the UK. Online Counselling in native language has been provided for Albanian survivors of trafficking by MWL psychologist. She is also providing psychological evidences to support the process of asylum seeking application. This proved to be a great support for these women and girls who despite their traumatic trafficking and exploitation experience, need to integrate in a new society in the UK.

This center is at the heart of our mission and expanding this project would mean directly impacting and saving the lives of vulnerable women and girls. We have been overwhelmed by the amount of need and are actively looking to expand the capacity of the center. Tirana is only 1 of the 6 regions we work in; a center like the ACT center would be highly utilized especially in more isolated areas of Albania.



## MWL Social Business:

This year, the social business aspect of our project has grown exponentially. This year, 102 women have been involved in our economic empowerment activities; these include craft making and education in English for more economic prospects. To best facilitate this expansion, MWL is looking forward to the launch of a project specific to MWL Social Businesses. This development will focus on our three main locations; Kallmet, Tropoje, and a new shop in Tirana. This will allow MWL to better empower our women and give more opportunity.

During this year 216 women were involved and 35,700 EUR were generated as an income:

- Butrint National Park this year provided market possibilities to 9 women with incomes of 3,400 EUR
- The MWL Valbona Shop, located in the Albanian Alps was opened in May and has sold goods in the amount of 4,600 EUR collecting products from Fier, Kallmet, Hot i Ri and mainly from the Tropoja women.
- IBVM Spain Schools are now a regular customer of the tailoring workshop of Kallmet, providing 14,500 EUR during this year.
- The Loom made crafts and other tailoring products from the Kallmet workshop have made 10,000 EUR
- Hot i Ri Centre made 3,200 EUR sales from products like embroidered cards and artisanal candles.

We are in the process of consolidating the 16 existing mini-businesses run by women and supporting them to carry out individually. In these businesses there are 45 self-employed women. The tourist season raised the income and provided a ready market. The MWL Social business provided the sales table for 10 of the women who produce artisan and tailoring products. The other 6 businesses, which are in the agriculture and livestock raising field, are ongoing and have established their regular customers. This year was the conclusion of the supervision phase.

MARY WARD  
LORETO  
SOCIAL BUSINESS





Tourism and the guesthouse programme had a training for employment methodology and is being piloted in the region of Tropoja with the Hotels and guesthouses of Valbona. In this programme a network has evolved of action initiated by MWL and included the Ministry of Finance, The National Agency of Tourism, the Municipality of Tropoja, 3 local and national NGO's, and three business owners and representatives of 24 guesthouses in Valbona Valley. The programme had as its aim vocational training and training for employment with 28 women and youth. This training was focused on working in hotels and restaurants as waiters, cooks, and maids. From this activity, 23 of the participants were employed directly after the training, for seasonal work. In collaboration with the Businesses and the Labor office in Tropoja, the next training is being prepared for next year's winter season. The demand for employment is getting higher with the rise of tourism in Albania.

This year in Shendelli, 52 women were employed during the season from May – September 2018. From these young women, 3 of them earned the money for continuing their studies in Tirana University. 26 young women from Tropoja and Shendelli are being trained in English language to increase their level of knowledge and be more easily employed at the tourist sites. 12 women from Hot i Ri are employed in Shkodra City through the negotiation of MWL's key worker. 3 other women are employed in the areas of Lezha and Fier and 23 women from Lezha were vocationally trained in Tailoring

The MWL social workers continue to keep contact with the 90 women who are employed for advice with the labor code and to prevent labor exploitation. With the rapid growth of the Social Business, MWL is moving forward into the development of a separate project. This year, a sales agent was employed in preparation for this growth and expansion, in order to make the market assessment and to enlarge the clientele for the Mary Ward Loreto Social Business. Market research, testing of the products, collaboration development, and business planning is all moving forward at an exciting rate.



## Prison Project:

The prison system in Albania is riddled with corruption and we value highly the work of serving the forgotten population that is imprisoned. Weekly, our Key worker from the ACT Centre visits the women in prison and MWL has committed to counsel and mentor women released from prison in entering back into society. The Women's project is currently mentoring an ex-prisoner who was a trafficker. This illustrates the full spectrum of the trafficking epidemic, and justice is manifesting itself; justice is at the heart of our charism and the life blood of everything that we do.

## Networks:

As in all of our work, we cannot do this alone. Networking has become an important element of the project for its strategy for creating a sustainable impact in the target areas, but also at a national and European level. The Manager of the MWL Women's Project is a Core group member of RENATE and 6 key workers are members. The MWL Women's Project Manager is the present chair, until December, 2018, of United Response Against Trafficking ( URAT ) network. The membership of this network consists of 4 religious congregations, 9 national NGOs (two of them run shelter for survivors of human trafficking ) and Peace Corps. St. Bakhita – the International Day of Prayer against human trafficking, has been a successful activity of this network in February 2018. URAT and MWL also made possible the UN Gift Box Campaign in Vlore for World Day Against Human Trafficking in July and in Kosovo for European Day Against Trafficking in October.

MWL has been invited and is part of different networks in Albania including the National Referral Mechanism, where we are represented by the MWL Women's Advice Center Coordinator. MWLW has developed tools and a network for the facilitation of women to market opportunities. A documentary called "Mary Ward Hope for Women" has been used as a tool to engage businesses and entrepreneurs to collaborate for ethical and socially responsible businesses. Organizing and participating in different fairs organized in Albania, and especially in Tirana, has served for introducing the products but also as a market assessment for the future ongoing work. This is only a fraction of the networking that MWL Women is involved in, proving the need for our work all over Albania, the Balkans, and Europe.





# MWL Men Project

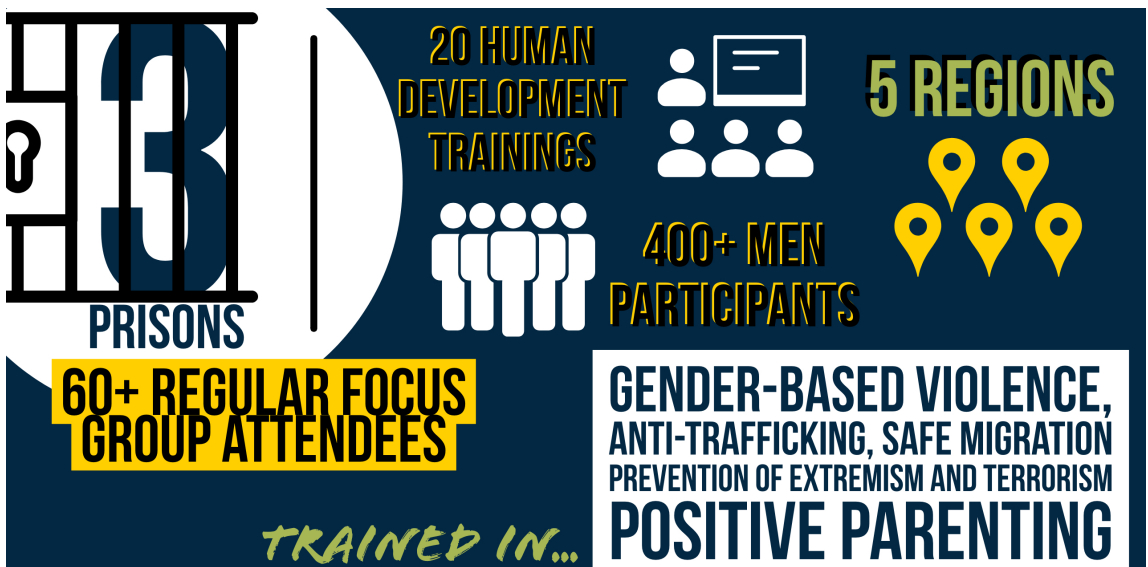
*Human trafficking, exploitation, and emigration are all issues that men face in Albania. Mary Ward Loreto, innovative to the current culture, has always empowered men as advocates and allies for change in the fight for systemic transformation. The MWL Men's Project approaches this mission by addressing the needs of the individual holistically and with dignity. Our objective is to strengthen the role of men in combating gender-based violence, abuse, and exploitation, and to promote progress toward human and economic development and the welfare of men as a whole. This year we have seen signs of positive impact, especially in the areas where we are implementing our projects.*

## Vocational Training:

The economic empowerment of men is an important part of our work. This year, 22 men have completed vocational training in welding, plumbing, and wood crafting. With this investment in the individual is coming a change in perspective; emigration is becoming second to finding opportunities to work and invest skills here in Albania. 40 other men received their certificates this year after completing their training in 2017 and a majority of them are employed from this initiative. Another very positive and impactful activity was the three-month course, on wood crafting and pyrography. 4 young men have been trained and are making crafts, earning more income for their families. One of the students was a shepherd who became one of the top students. He has since been invited to showcase his artwork in a fair in Italy.

## Human Development Trainings:

In this reporting period, 20 Human Development Trainings have been organized in 5 regions. Over 400 men participated in the following topics: gender-based violence, anti-trafficking, safe migration, prevention of extremism and terrorism, and positive parenting, dependencies on



alcohol and narcotics, medicinal herbs, and property legalisation. The number of participants in these trainings was between 10 and 20 men. The age of participants range from 25 to 55. We are seeing an increase in engagement by participants in these sessions, with the presence of women producing a positive environment with varying points of view, facilitating deeper and more impactful discussion. We have men in 5 communities who have been trained in a new approach and perspective on delicate and taboo topics in Albania such as gender based violence and positive parenting, where we are seeing very positive impacts on the individuals, families, and the communities.

The majority of these programs are implemented in rural areas, where the community's economy is based on agriculture and livestock. The training on medicinal herbs had a great impact and direct benefit for the community. After this training this year, hundreds of people collected medicinal herbs as usual but with higher quality and higher income than recent years. The training on the registration of land and property has been a great facilitation for communities where there is a lack of legal culture and proceedings are overwhelmed with bureaucracy. In all areas where we developed this training, there has been an increase in applications and certifications; consequently, men and women now have more opportunities to access different grants and more opportunities to develop their property.

### **Community Empowerment:**

At MWL we believe that systemic-level issues are best addressed and solved in community. This is why community empowerment is so important to our mission. Through forums, workshops, and strategic planning in collaboration with municipalities, change can be realized, and societies can transform. After our 2016 research, "Challenges and Perspectives of Men in the Albanian Society", we knew that to make a change, community outreach and development was necessary. According to the recommendations we have organized forums and other activities trying to empower the community





for their potential. The research in Divjaka, forums in Puka and Fushe Arres, an exhibition in Puka, and numerous focus group in all areas, have awoken in the communities a will and hope for change. The Puka Wood Craft Exhibition on September 29, 2018 is a great example of this awakening, as it was the first exhibition in that region in 27 years. MWL Men's Project has reached Puka, Lushnja, Divjaka, and Fushe Arres this year, and our sights are set on growth.

### **Prison Project:**

The prison system in Albania, instead of a just and rehabilitating institution, is one of deep seeded corruption and minimization of basic human rights. In prison work, it is very easy to identify the need and yet very difficult to find ways to help because of the lack of programs, transparency, and sustainability of the personnel in the administration. MWL works to tackle this issue head on by assembling focus groups in prison. More than 60 men regularly attend across 3 prisons. These men are supported with basic necessities, emergency needs that the prison does not provide, and legal support. Within their support groups, these men participate in anti-trafficking workshops, giving the men a better understanding of the gravity of this phenomenon and giving MWL a better understanding of how we can combat it.

This was our third year of weekly visits to the prisons, and we have built up trust and rapport with the men in our groups. The attitude of the men has shifted from uncertainty and distrust of our presence to active collaboration and cooperation in helping us build community. When we are working in the prisons, we are always thinking about the youth and men outside the prison, people who are at very high risk of being involved in criminal behavior, in trafficking of human beings, because of their economic and social conditions. Our work within the prisons helps us in our work outside of the prisons. Our mission stays the same: to help individuals reach their full potential, with dignity and justice, to pursue a better future. For many prisoners, MWL has been the bridge between them and their families, the judiciary system, and the church. Our plans and dreams are to find a way to extend our presence in prisons. We see our work as an investment in prevention and awareness for when these men are free and trying to reintegrate into society as productive and contributing citizens.



# MWL Youth Project

*Our goal of systemic and significant change requires an inclusive approach to society. We accomplish this by providing opportunities and giving hope to disadvantaged young people in areas across Albania.*

## Focus Group Program:

Youth empowerment is best realized in community. Our Focus Group Program accomplishes that community and invests in the younger generation in a way that society cannot. Students are vocationally trained for employment, given ownership of community, organize and participate in voluntary activities, are trained in human development, and are counseled and supported through the employment process. Trainings range from electrical work and mechanics to cooking and hairdressing. They are also trained in human development. 6 trainings were given to the focus groups in social media effects on self-image, critical thinking and decision making, human anti-trafficking, job search, different and equal, and entrepreneurship. We are providing a pathway to employment and empowerment; in a community of empowered and employed youth, trafficking cannot survive. This program, which has flourished in Lushnja, Puka, and Rreshen, is vital to the systemic change that we are driving to achieve. Through the work of our staff and the utilization of our network, this year 76 young people were enrolled in this program across the country.

## Leadership Program:

One of the most exciting ventures for the sustainability of our work is investment in youth leaders and advocates. The Leadership Program helps establish within the young people confidence in themselves and confidence in their communities, giving them the motivation and ambition to invest their skills and abilities into their communities. This year, this program has been focused



in Durres, with 28 trainings and workshops; 4 social initiatives, one being a collaboration with the Peace Corps in Lushnja where they led a peer-to-peer education session on Trafficking in Human Beings and Modern Slavery; 2 socializing activities; 1 summer camp organized for 50 youth; and the “Leadership Program Handbook” produced by the trainers of the program. We can say that the 7 young people, who were part of the entire program, have succeeded in these two years. They have gained new skills like listening skills, expressive skills, socializing with their peers, and the desire to volunteer to give from their self to help others. These same young people have established a youth group in their community who are already active and effecting change. For many, The MWL Youth Leadership Program is one of the first times they are asked about their dreams, ambitions, and aspirations that they have for the future and have been challenged to pursue these dreams.

Many are faced with family social problems, poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, health problems and many other issues. It is a challenge for them to be leaders in the community where they live due to the fact that their communities do not offer facilities to express the will they have to contribute. The area they live in is an informal area formed in the last 20 years. Being an informal area, many of the state’s services are missing. The project required the support of other community actors such as parents, schools, municipal administration, and volunteer psychologists to work with the group. Trainings and workshops were developed with young people in line with the vision to train them as community leaders to take initiatives for services in their community. We look forward to expanding this program to other areas.

#### **Human Development Training Program:**

Awareness raising and training is the grassroots level work that is making headway toward systemic change. This year, MWL’s Human Development Training Program has reached 1,222 young people vulnerable to exploitation.



Our Youth Project team has conducted 47 trainings and workshops in the effects of social media on self-image, anti-trafficking and awareness raising of human trafficking, slavery and safe migration, and critical thinking and decision making in 17 regions of Albania. These trainings are vital to our mission of not just raising awareness but ending human trafficking at a systemic level.

### **“Learning, Practicing and Influencing Integrity Fellowship Project” in Lezha.**

This was a 10 month long, EU funded project run by the MWL Youth Manager as part of the MWL Youth project in collaboration with the MWL Women Social Worker of Lezha. The overall objective of the LPIIF project was prompting the youth to represent their communities within the structures of the institution of the Municipality in Lezha. The aim was to transform this institution into a trustworthy and efficient mechanism of problem solving and best practice thus reducing unlawful and inappropriate behavior within local government. The specific objective is strengthening the role of the youth in promoting the good governance and prevention of inappropriate behavior, poor customer service, and corruptive practices, at all Municipality levels, as per community feedback and youth monitoring. Throughout these 10 months, the project has been introduced within the institutional environment of Lezha and has become an integral part of the day-to-day routine of the Municipality and its dependent institutions. Moreover, the project has established the youth group that has started the fellowship journey within the Municipality and has documented its progress and increase of knowledge to enrich their personal experience.

They have also contributed to a more qualitative relationship between Civil Society, as representatives of the community and the Local Government, as the main policy maker in the region. Now these 10 young people are members of the Youth Counseling Board (YCB) and will improve upon the already apparent results that have come with the implementation of the Action. The project aimed to increase their self-esteem by putting them in the centre of the action and requesting that the Municipality considers them partners. This was achieved even by formal signing of the Collaboration Agreement between YCB, Mary Ward Loreto, and the Municipality as well as in the formal delivering of the Manual of YCB to those present in the Project Closing Event. In spite of hierarchy and personnel restructuring in the municipality, the welcoming and warm feelings and attitudes of the staff towards youth involved, has been very encouraging and promising. The youth has encountered a cooperative mind-set and has been free to contribute and learn and also the YCB is very much appreciated and welcomed to continue to contribute to the democratization of this institution.



# MWL Education Project

The MWL Education Project is solely focused on advocating for ethical standards and the elimination of the corruption in the education system. Our education project is combating human trafficking and exploitation by emphasizing the importance of fighting corruption with democratic processes for the current generation and the generations to come. The education of our youth is the front lines of this fight for sustainable systemic change. Since the completion of our extensive research titled “Ethics in the Education System in Albania”, Mary Ward Loreto’s Education Project has proven more than necessary. This year has been a very successful year for the Education Project. Our research has now been distributed to all institutions and schools that took part in the research in the North and South of Albania. This distribution of the research has led to the opening of dialogue with municipalities. All three conferences in Tirana and the North and South of the country, in Shkoder and Vlora respectively, have now been accomplished, with a total presence of 700+ teachers, governors, parents, and Ministry of Education staff, both locally and nationally.

It was not expected that so many members of the Ministry of Education, nationally and locally, would be interested in this research and give such invaluable support for the research itself and for the conference launching. It was also not expected that local mayors would be so interested in this research. The impact has been much greater because of this public presence and acknowledgment of the value of this research. The press and media have been involved throughout and raised a massive debate in the country about these levels of corruption revealed in the original research. A can of worms has been opened and now we know that this momentum for systemic change in Albania cannot be halted. The ministry of Education declared at the Conference in Vlora that a new Code of Ethics is to be written and passed in the Albanian parliament. It was expressed at the conference that this research has indicated how the present Code of Ethics is outdated and that a new one must be written and implemented. The Education Project is run by the MWL Education Board, who has been most efficient with time and resources to make this launching of the research all over the country as successful as possible. We have been asked by the Ministry of Education to





devise a program for all educational establishments in Albania to teach ethics within the newly revised curriculum in the country. This is an exciting endeavor and we look forward to strengthening our partnership with the Ministry.

### **Service Learning:**

The Service Learning Project aims to create community among students, parents, and governmental bodies, creating a healthy environment of accountability and collaboration, free of corruption, while developing the students' interpersonal development and leadership skills. All stakeholders have an active role, which makes the implementation of MWL's goals and methodology tangible. Currently 52 students are involved in this project in Lezha. The MWL Education Project implemented its goals and objectives in Service Learning at the Rogationist School in Lezhe. This is a pilot project implementing the Service Learning methodology. Service Learning involves learning through action related to the school curriculum, networking with the local municipality and in partnership with the local community. Most of the community protagonists were parents of the children at the school. The goal is achieved through service action in the local community.

The students apply what they learn in class to community issues and at the same time learn from the experience as they achieve real objectives within the community. The introduction training session was accomplished with 16 teaching staff. There was exceptional positive feedback and support for the project from the staff members. After this event, 37 students from the School were trained in the details and stages of the methodology as well as being given an introduction to the stages of project implementation. The teaching staff has worked closely with the MWL staff, the community, the municipality and the students, to implement the process for this new learning approach. Through the service learning programme, the young people involved have increased their communication skills and their interpersonal development, particularly





the ability to work well with others. In addition, they have developed personal leadership skills. The students and the school staff and the local community members who included parents from the school, chose two topics that are affecting the youngsters. The topics chosen were “Bullying” and “Life During the Time of Communism.”

Bullying is quite a concern for the youth, families, parents and the communities. The student’s working groups drafted the processes for implementing the project activities. The trainings against bullying have taken place in the community and the school. The students have increased the awareness of the impact of bullying, not only in their school, but also in the community and other schools in the project development area. The other mini project “Life During the Time of Communism” is more complex because the students have not experienced this era. However, communism is still affecting the lives of Albanians. The education system is lacking a history of communism, and the students, through the Service Learning methodology, wish to involve their parents and the community to learn more about that important and dreadful period which the Albanian society experienced for over fifty years. The students were very enthusiastic.

A small booklet Called ‘Service Learning Pilot Project in Lezhe’, has been produced and will be presented at the concluding celebration of this project which will take place in December. It will include the stories resulting from the interviews regarding the era and impact of communism in Lezha, the training methodology of the Training Against Bullying, and the process of Service Learning implemented during this reporting period. A film of the whole project will also be presented at the launching event. Through the Service Learning project the students are learning to appraise the importance of democracy and to fight for more democratic processes for themselves and the coming generations. Continuing the important work of the Education Project is vital to cement the transformation in ethics in the education system of Albania. We look forward to gaining the capacity to make this project and research fully known and implemented across the country. It is hoped that the project will be forwarded with a further research on the causes of the high levels of corruption in this system, the teaching of ethics throughout the country and developing the service learning in three new regions. The hope needs to be made a reality.



## Problems Encountered:

The work of MWL comes up against the obstacles of lack of statutory services, corruption and drought of justice in Albania, and possibly most pressing, a lack of funding.

The nature of our work is to reach the most vulnerable in Albania; this population is not being properly served by the state and our work can face dead ends when institutions and systems work against us. Almost all of our roadblocks in projects has derived from the corruption in Albania. We have learned to work through this obstacles and fight for justice so that our work can thrive. Our partnerships with ministries and municipalities is helping bridge this gap and helping our work and the work of the municipalities. When these partnerships are more efficient our work can be better realized and we can fight the systemic dishonesty.

In all of our projects, we are looking forward to expansion and growth in new directions. This growth is not possible without more funding. We have recently expanded our staff to include a development officer who will be easing the strain our staff was experiencing of balancing doing our best work and seeking funding to support that work. MWL is growing into the addition of a department devoted to development and fundraising.

## Lessons Learned:

The most important lesson learned this year is the necessity for diversification of funding for our organization. Our projects are growing into directions that are exciting and will help us best reach and serve our beneficiaries; without consistent and reliable funding, these developments simply cannot be realized. With the assurance of support, our projects can continue to flourish and evolve into the most efficient and effective models.

**We are continuing to move forward with the expansion of a Development and Fundraising Department at MWL.**

*"Our final word is to thank our present generous donors who not only provide the finance for the work but who are constantly available, giving at all times sound advice and encouragement. The mission of Mary Ward Loreto can only be realized with this support.*

*We would also like to thank the Mary Ward Loreto Board for their ongoing advice, collaboration, and support. During this year, we are particularly grateful for the untiring work of William Morrell in the production of a shortened and update version of the Mary Ward Loreto Safeguarding Policy."*



# Mary Ward Loreto

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