

Newsletter 4, July 2016

Welcome to MWL 4th Newsletter

It is hot in Albania and soon the schools will be closed. As the weather changes so do the activities of the different MWL projects. Summer in the tourist parts of Albania means the opening of the tourist market for selling the handmade crafts of the MWL women's group. The MWL youth continue to work towards their goal of gaining employment but make time for summer days out together.

The MWL National Education project is preparing the instruments for the National Research of the education system in Albania whilst the MWL Men's project research is now completed and already some surprises are being revealed about the situation and the perspectives of the men in Albania. This project is also faithful to its weekly sessions in one of the men's prisons and soon this will be extended to the women's prison where 7 female traffickers have recently been convicted.

Since the last newsletter in March, the trafficking situation and the vulnerability of so many in Albania through poverty, corruption, and much loss of hope, means that MWL has a massive task staying hopeful. We need to empower our beneficiaries to feel this way, too.

It is becoming increasingly clear that MWL is being called to train leaders amongst the youth who are the future and hope for Albania. This new initiative will begin in October, 2016. It is important we stay open to transformative change and the challenge which this brings to us all.

Meantime it will soon be time to take a well-earned break. We wish all our readers, beneficiaries and partners a safe and happy holiday.

Imelda Poole (President MWL)



Mary Ward Loreto

MWL Youth plan final events: Volunteering for the UNGift box campaign. Training in Business, beginning new work.

Cross Border protection of Victims of Trafficking.

The MWL Women's projects completes the research on NGOs in Tirana and is ready to open the Women's advice centre later in the year.

Developing prison work in Tirana/Durres. Listening to their needs and responding.

MWL Men's project is assisted by new workers. The research is completed and the findings are challenging for our way forward.

Empowering through Justice, Freedom and Sincerity

MWL Education project developing the national education research leading to systemic change in Albania.

Friends of Mary Ward, Meeting monthly. International meeting in UK 2017.

MWL Women's Project: Development of Summer Markets: Liaison with statutory systems

UN Gift Box Campaign led by URAT, a network against trafficking based at Mary Ward Loreto

Grass Roots Action

MWL Education National Project

During this time much work has been accomplished to launch the MWL Education project in Albania. This project is focused on an analysis of Ethics and Corruption in the Education System at national level. The research will be qualitative and quantitative to ensure full understanding of the reality in these establishments and to compare the results with best practice globally. A full team has been employed.

The MWL Education Board has been pivotal in steering through the initial implementation of the pilot project, the launching of which took place in March, 2016. Now, a newly appointed project manager is in place from the University of Tirana. A consultant and coach from the Company, Mirnes, are engaged for their professional services. A research company, ACER, has now been employed to lead the logistics of the research throughout Albania from Kindergarten to University level. All final reports will be accomplished in liaison with the MWL education team, led by the Project manager and the MWL Education Board.



The Education Minister is in liaison with the project manager throughout this process. This project is considered to be a huge undertaking but an influential one for the future of Albania and for fundamental systemic change. It will highlight the level of corruption and the lack of ethics in many education establishments in Albania. The project conferences, at which all findings will be presented, will be during the first week of April ending in Tirana on April 7th.

“UN Gift Box” Campaign in Albania

comes as a collaboration between various NGOs and Religious Congregations. They are united in the common fight against trafficking in Albania. Mary Ward Loreto, is orientated towards creating a bridge of cooperation and communication between organizations against trafficking, including victims and the services offered to them, with a view to increasing awareness over the issue.

The UNGIFT BOX campaign, is an Albanian version of an initiative of "Stop the Traffik" and "United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking." This project increases public awareness on the issue of human trafficking and its consequences through a box-shaped object, placed in the street and accessible to all. On the outside of the "UN Gift Box" are written phrases used by traffickers to make their offers more attractive, while the interior of the box shows the reality that accompanies these promises. Since 2012, this project has been successfully implemented in 6 countries and has affected an audience of 55,000 people. To maximize the impact of the project, the "UN Gift box", with dimensions 225x225cm, will move through four cities of Albania in Durres, Saranda, Shkodra, ending up in Tirana, on October 18 ("European Day against Trafficking in Human Beings"). On this date we will be closing the Gift Box campaign in Tirana and concluding with a Film Festival at one of the venues in this city.

We will collaborate closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with the municipalities of these cities, as well as various organizations and volunteers. Mrs. Elona Gjebrea, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, will be present at the opening and closing of the campaign in Durres and Tirana.

*Come and Join in our mission.
All together we are stronger as
we raise our voices to prevent
trafficking in human beings.*



Below are the dates when the campaigns will take place in each city:

- From 26th of July to 2nd of August in Durres;
- From 3rd - 10th of September in Saranda;
- From 1st -8th of October in Shkodra;
- From 15th – 22nd of October in Tirana;

Presenting at the United Nations, April 2016

Many readers will have heard the input given by Sr Imelda at the UN on human trafficking and the role which RENATE plays to reduce the number of trafficked victims in Europe. If you have not heard this and would like to hear it you may like to go to www.albaniahope.com to access the link at the bottom of the home page. There you will also be able to listen to all of the talks given on that day. Archbishop Auza, the nuncio at the UN for the Holy See wrote after the event: 'The high turnout for the event was a sign of how avidly many in the UN community as well as those on the front lines of the fight against human trafficking, forced labor and all forms of modern slavery look with resolve and hope for the achievement of Targets 8.7, 5.2 and 1.6.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals and the elimination of this scourge. As a follow up to this event, our Mission is putting together the "Acta" so that the interventions of the Conference and the concrete proposals made can reach the widest possible audience. Thank you for already having given a copy of your remarks to Fr Roger Landry at the Holy See, so that they might be included.' He ended: 'Faleminderit shumë!!' Bishop Auza, immediately after the fall of communism, was a Vatican diplomat at the nunciature in Albania.



Ending Human Trafficking by 2030: The Role of Global Partnerships in Eradicating Modern Slavery

Visit to Norway and Denmark on Behalf of RENATE

Although RENATE is now represented in 25 European countries, there was no voice being heard from those in Scandinavia working in the field and where many East Europeans are being trafficked. Sr Adina Balan CJ and Sr Imelda Poole IBVM represented RENATE in this work. The following is a list of the organisations we visited during our five day trip. Most of these organisations have websites.

- **Oslo:** Dominican Sisters, Kirkens Bymisjon, Pro Sentret, Rosa Foundation, Caritas Norway, Round table of Catholic Organisations in Oslo.
- **Copenhagen:** Reten International, The Little Sisters of Jesus, KIT: Kirkens Integrations Tjeneste.
- **Swedish Baptist Church:** Pastor Sven-Gunnar from Sweden had come to Copenhagen to expose the story of trafficked victims, beginning with the reality of the victims and their dream, and going on to present the destruction of this dream, the torture, the rescue and rehabilitation of the victims, and the eventual prosecution of the trafficker. The presentations were displayed in three tents, with a brilliant use of colour and light, exposing the viewer to the feelings of the trafficked.



These days in Scandinavia gave hope for the future because of the connections made and the continued dialogue with people from this part of Europe. At the same time it was a good opportunity for us to understand the Nordic model, the Law in Sweden and Norway criminalises the user in the sex industry but not the sex worker. It was very helpful to know that there is a difference in the letter of the law and implementation in different countries. It is very helpful for RENATE to have members from these countries and especially those whose countries are deliberating on this model. Overall this visit gave the members of RENATE more than could have been hoped for at this time in the history of the Foundation.

Mary Ward Loreto Visits OSCE

Ana Stakaj, the manager of MWL Women and Imelda Poole had the privilege of visiting the deputy director and his colleagues from OSCE, who work in the field of anti-trafficking and Head of Governance. OSCE plays an important role in Albania. They state as their remit on their website: "Security touches on many aspects of the way we live and are governed. The OSCE's comprehensive view of security covers three 'dimensions': the politico-military; the economic and environmental; and the human. The OSCE's activities cover all three of these areas, from 'hard' security issues such as conflict prevention to fostering economic development, ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources, and promoting the full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Mr Wilton spoke of the MWL visit as important in paving the way for future collaboration. He spoke of being impressed by the range of MWL work and by the need to maintain good contact and, where possible, co-ordination to ensure complementarity. We all agreed it would be a great bonus if we found some way to work together in the future. We know we have a need to ensure we develop this collaboration.

Now OSCE has invited MWL to participate in a workshop in Montenegro at the end of August on Migration and Tackling Trafficking issues.

Website Development and Marketing

MWL in its strategy for developing human resources, applies a methodology for building values for empowerment. The basis of this methodology is the charism of Mary Ward, Freedom, Justice and Truth. MWL is enabling people to reach their full potential through training, mentoring, supervision and care.

In June, the managers of MWL were trained in Marketing. Mrs Annie Bannister, a Marketing and Website Consultant from the UK, led the Managers through this training and they were challenged to find new ways to promote the work of MWL and involve more people in this mission.

We will create a new marketing action plan for the upcoming year. Annie Bannister also trained our website manager for two days on website development. The training was focused on the technical use of social networks.



Safe Migration

On 13th of May the MWL Team in the main office of the foundation was part of a special experience. Led by Besfort Lamallari, the team were introduced to the new phenomenon of Migration and its challenges. Besfort presented the extent of migration in the Mediterranean and how to deal with the challenges. We also looked at the processes for Safe Migration. In this training, issues like Context of Migration, Type of Migration, Push and Pull factors of countries of origin and destination countries, international and national factors that provide this phenomenon, were part of the discussions and all of these issues were well addressed.

Through brainstorming and group work the team has highlighted recommendations that will be shown very soon in the everyday actions of the team members. The aim of this training was to promote Safe Migration and to provide targets for the work with the necessary tools needed for experiencing safe mobility.



Radicalisation

On 2th of June the MWL Team were part of a totally new experience. They were invited to gather information for a global issue that is of concern to all the professionals around the world. Besfort Lamallari, one of authors of the study 'Religious Radicalism and Violent Extremism in Albania,' led the training and presented the whole background of this global issue and how it affects Albanian society. He facilitated the team in the development of concrete steps which can be translated into their everyday actions of work. Besfort presented new concepts like Violent Extremism, Foreign Fighters, Root causes and triggers of Radicalization. He also spoke of Concepts often misunderstood, such as Takfirism, Jihad, Shehid, and Non-Participation in Voting. He also presented Radicalisation techniques and their impact on the most vulnerable target: Youth. Besfort explained the link between Radicalisation, Politics and Religion, making clear the plan of processes used. At the end of the training, the team, facilitated by Besfort, became more aware of the amazing work which can be done in the field to prevent Radicalisation and to help everyone live in a free, dignified and respectful way.

MWL Staff Training and Staff Care Program, April 2016

Mary Ward Loreto has a holistic approach towards staff capacity building, including professional development. It has become a tradition that on an annual basis MWL assigns a special week for staff care. This year it took place from April 25th to April 29th, 2016, and was focused on multimedia. All the staff had a working and enjoyable time together. This activity took place in Durres and Berat, a historical town in the south of Albania. A specialist in multimedia was invited to accompany the staff during the five days of activities, on the subject of Media and Multimedia and how it is used and can be used from a Nonprofit Organisation's perspective.

During the first two days of the training the staff was introduced to the basic concepts of media and multimedia such as film, documentary, reportage, news, photo and journalism. The training was all very practical, using group techniques. The staff was advised how to develop practical skills and to learn by viewing, doing and imagination. The visit in Berat was a wonderful day. Berat is a 2,400 year old town located in south-central Albania. It is known as "the town of a thousand windows, also the Museum City." It is one of the oldest and most beautiful towns of Albania, a settlement having existed there since at least the 6th century BC, when it was a fortress-settlement of the Illirian Dassaretae tribe.



The old town was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in July 2008. It is a remarkable Ottoman town, with a wealth of beautiful buildings of the highest architectural and historical interest. Besides sightseeing and enjoying the beautiful city of Berat, MWL staff intertwined this day out with practicing the use of video and camera and catching the most beautiful moments of that day.

The training on multimedia included as well role-plays where the staff divided into teams to play the role of the executive director, the camera, the editing and the role of executive producer. The staff had to come out with four productions. After hard work over two days, the staff divided into four teams, realizing their goals. On the last evening of the staff care week there was a well-organized event where each team presented the topic that they had addressed with their films. The first three topics chosen for the short films were: "the Passport," which addressed safe migration issues, "Your business is our business" and "From Mirdita to lagje Mirdita," which addressed internal migration issues and problems that Albanian youth face. The last film was a humorous film called "Joy" with the best of the funny moments of the whole staff care week.

Actually Mary Ward Loreto staff has opened a new window on how to better present their work and how to make good use of media and multimedia to address issues that concern our communities.

MWL Men's Project:

It has taken about 5 months from the project launch, working with volunteers and adhoc male workers to distribute and collect over 1,000 questionnaires in ten cities of Albania, namely Saranda, Lushnja, Fier, Berat, Durres, Tirana, Lezha, Shkodra, Puka and Tropoja. Now MWL Men is a known reality for many of the rural areas of Albania, who through focus groups have had the opportunity to express the concerns and needs of their communities, the challenges they face in achieving the dream of becoming proactive, and in facing the issues in Albanian society related to the lack of gender equality.

The concrete potential of rural development were explained in detail, in the knowledge that the community itself has many resources. Through semi-structured interviews, MWL Men has managed to create a deeper perception of the mentality that the men present in the above communities, drawing interesting data which will be published at the end of the study in September. Steve Coryell, the researcher specialist has most of the data which has been collected over the previous 5 months. From the data will emerge very interesting findings, which will help us create a vision for the future.



An important development in the work this month is that MWL Men has paid 3 ad hoc workers in three different regions to assist the manager of the project. For this MWL is very grateful for their brilliant work.

MWL Youth Update – Training in Durres on “Different and Equal”

On the 28th and 29th of May, Mary Ward Loreto organized in Durres the training on “Different and Equal.” This event is part of the human development component of the youth project. The topic included a full module on how stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination affect the individual and the society. The issue was developed in a very interactive way, in the social and psychological context. Through the training we aimed to help young people reconsider their attitudes and encourage positive ones, empowering them to truly accepted their self-image and influence the social self. The youth were very dynamic and interested. The activity helped them have a bonding experience amongst themselves. It was very inspiring to look at how the training made them draw closer to each other, despite the fact that they were meeting for the first time and their backgrounds are so different. This training was offered to the youth from the 3 focus groups. 27 young people from Lushja, Tirana and Puka participated in the training.



MWL Youth Project- Update



MWL Youth Project has continued hosting trainings for youth groups in more than 15 areas of Albania, reaching a number of approximately 450-500 youngsters. With the final aim of preventing human trafficking, these target groups have been part of informational sessions on the topic of “Human Anti-trafficking”, as well as trainings on “Self-awareness” and “Conflict Resolution.” Most of these trainings have taken place in partner school venues, such as educational institutions. Others have been hosted in church community venues and various other social ambiances.

Apart from the youngsters, our team often receives invitations from an audience made of representatives of different governmental or nongovernmental institutions. Therefore, on April, MWL Youth held a training in the shape of an open debate in Rreshen, in venues offered by the Regional Administrator. The group developed a constructive conversation between representatives from civil society and those from governmental institutions. Many questions and ideas were brought up and discussed. It can definitely be considered as a successful approach for MWL to analyse this thematic with different sectors of society.

Working Against Trafficking in England

From April 10 to April 18th, 2016, two staff from the women & youth projects, Aferdita Gjoni and Sara Capaliku, paid a visit to the UK. The visit consisted of a presentation held in York on April 11, 2014, at the “Bar Convent in York” with Mary Ward friends. The meeting’s theme was “A Mary Ward’s Woman in the Mission of Tackling Human Trafficking.” Twenty-two attendants were present at the meeting. Interest was quite high on the work that Mary Ward Loreto Foundation is doing in Albania through its projects and in coordination with its partners.

Due to such a successful meeting some concrete steps were undertaken by the participants who indicated their willingness to establish a support group to address projects or initiatives that Mary Ward Loreto staff would consider were needed to support the work in relation to the financial needs and also alternative kinds of support. The visit in York was followed up by the Annual Meeting in High Leigh of ANDANTE “The European Alliance of Catholic Women’s Organisations.” It was a four day conference which included strategic planning. ANDANTE has participatory status as an international NGO at the Council of Europe



and is a member of the Conference of International non-governmental organisations represented at the Council of Europe.

Besides the study day’s work, ANDANTE celebrated the 10th Anniversary of its foundation, and presented the successes that they have been able to achieve in the past ten years. ANDANTE is lobbying about issues such as human trafficking and poverty, but as well has as a priority to strengthen women’s voices within the Catholic Church.

The two staff from Mary Ward Loreto projects lobbied hard on human trafficking issues such as modern day slavery. Among the priorities chosen to be addressed by ANDANTE during the coming year will be: 1. Trafficking/modern day slavery; 2. Women in the Church; 3. Refugees/Migrants.

Workshop on Developing and Leading Volunteer teams

The workshop took place in Zagreb, Croatia from the 18th - 20th of May, 2016. This training is organized by ERSTE Foundation under the NGO Academy programme. The programme aims to strengthen Civil Society in Central and South-Eastern Europe by providing further educational opportunities. Concretely, the training was an opportunity to know better the need for volunteers balanced with what the volunteer needs. The first session was more focused on theoretically examining how to successfully formulate volunteer cooperation and then, in the second session, the theoretical concepts were expanded by exploring practical experiences from the participants and their organizations. There were 14 people present from 9 different European countries. The workshop was very helpful in building interpersonal management skills. It was also an excellent opportunity to meet new people who work in different parts of Europe and share similar values and work.



Family in a global context: current perspectives and the future



On 25 May 2016, in the premises of Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic University, the conference "Family in a global context: current perspectives and future" was held. The event was organized in collaboration with the Universities of "Zoja e Keshillit te Mire" and "Hena e Plotë". To give their message at this conference were participants from politics and religious communities such as the President of the Republic, Mr. Bujar Nishani, the Apostolic Nuncio to Albania, Archbishop Ramiro Moliner Inglés, the Ambassador of Italy in Albania, Alberto Cutillo, Monsignor Vincenzo Paglia, the Rector of the Catholic University, Prof. Bruno Giardina and Bedër University Rector, Prof. Ferdinand Gjana.

These last, greatly appreciated the cooperation between the two institutions. Representatives from MWL Foundation participated in this activity. The conference highlighted the social function of the family: if the family goes into crisis, the crisis goes on throughout society. Also highlighted was the responsibility to educate the younger generation about the family. This conference supported the initiative of institutions that require protection of natural family values and protection from risks that violate basic principles of the family.

Volunteers

For the last 5 months male volunteers have become part of the team of MWL Men in many activities related to the project. Their contribution has been invaluable. Despite a lack of experience, the men have shown an admirable dedication and commitment, putting into practical action through the project plan, their theoretical knowledge acquired from the university where they study (Faculty of Social Sciences). Their commitment has involved distributing forms and in face-to-face interviews with men in various communities where the project has been extended.



We take this opportunity to thank the supervisory professors who have shown willingness to cooperate with MWL Men in this work. These new initiatives have involved MWL in developing new tools to ensure these workers are integrated into the team of MWL. Contracts have been drawn up and signed by all the stakeholders. This is a new set of standards for these young men who are not used to this professional conduct in so many parts of Albania. In most people's experiences these relations are usually set up in an informal manner and only in relation to different levels of cooperation. MWLM also encourages other young people who are willing to contribute in other stages of the project, since the contribution of volunteers is of primary importance.

Strengthening Policewomen's Leadership Skills: Training in Anti-trafficking

MWL and their partners, Different & Equal, and Little Angels, our partner Roma project, were invited to share their work with a group of policewomen in Tirana who were being trained for leadership posts. Specifically we were invited to speak on the work in anti-trafficking which is our focus, and the members shared the work of six network projects with the Albanian police. This meeting was an opportunity to strengthen partnerships with the Albanian Police to combat human trafficking. There were fourteen policewomen present and they became very engaged in the discussion as the six member team of workers shared their stories. The policewomen present at this meeting showed great interest to know more about our work and expressed their willingness to collaborate and support us in our cases. They also shared their stories and claimed that they needed more collaboration with NGO's which would help the police in addressing their cases. Consequent to this visit and the reflections given by the policewomen to many other people, we have had two more requests for meetings with other people, from the US embassy and OSCE.



Logistics in Mary Ward Loreto

Mary Ward Loreto employed a new worker in April. His name is Albert Lala and he is an assistant in the Logistics team and a driver. It is very important to Mary Ward Loreto, as it expands, that we have good staff in place in the logistics team to ensure safe passage of staff to all parts of the country and that every event is well managed. Berti is a very welcome new member of MWL staff. During this period the UNGift box campaign is being organised. This is demanding much time and energy from the logistics team. This UNGift Box Campaign against the trafficking in human persons has already been organised in six other countries. The logistics staff will be dealing with the organization and construction of the box. See the FB page around July 26th for pictures of this event.

The MWL board meeting

On May the 9th at the MWL offices the Board of Directors meeting was held. The purpose of this meeting was the update and sharing of the projects and recent developments and also to seek their advice on aspects related to the organization. We are very thankful to them for their full commitment and readiness to assist us with the knowledge, expertise, public relations and promotion.

Head of Catholic Education Commission

During this period the head of the Catholic Education Commission for the Catholic Church, Sr Teuta (Salesian), approached MWL to ask for support in their future development and in the analysis of their own schools. We have agreed to support this work and hope to share some of our research documents, once the national research has been completed, to help them with their own on-going analysis. The MWL President has been invited to join a team of advisors being set up by this Catholic Education Commission to support this renewal in their schools.



The social innovation and management programme

From March - June, 2016, the Manager of MWL Women attended the ERSTE Foundation NGO Academy programme. This programme is implemented in cooperation with the Competence Centre for Nonprofit Organisations and Social Entrepreneurship of Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Vienna). They focused on the further development of management competencies and addressed a huge variety of topics related to this, aiming at the further development of non-profit organisations and their leading staff. The programme combined practice orientation with a solid base of expert knowledge and provided the MWL Women Manager with an opportunity to broaden her knowledge and skills required to manage the MWL Women's project and to use expert input to work on specific challenges related to the work in an organizational manner. We are thankful to ERSTE Foundation NGO Academy staff for providing us with this knowledge and enhancement of skills.



Prison Project

Every Monday, the prisoners from Fush Kruje are very happy to know that at 11:00 they will have a visit from representatives of the project MWL Men. The conditions in Albanian prisons are miserable, lacking basic elements like drinking water or normal environments to sleep. Social services or recreational activities are very low. The presence of our foundation enables the prisoners to know they are not forgotten. It gives the men in the prison an incentive to survive and to forget the daily stress and trauma. A group of about 20 of the prisoners are part of the weekly meetings in which various problems are treated within the premises of the prison. They also tackle issues related to the larger society, sharing their common experience in discussion.

MWL Men have the opportunity to undertake different initiatives to enable the people serving prison sentences, become more engaged in what is a very stifled environment. Often movies are shown with themes enabling the men to express their feelings, ideas and impressions of life as they see it. MWL Men intends to continue these activities and to expand them even more. "After you come to help in these prisons, you feel more than ever the need for MWL Men's workers to be there at the time of such difficulty in the lives of these men."



Sponsorship

Sadly over this reporting period we have found out that our source for sponsorship funding for university students, at post graduate level, has now ceased and the Foundation we linked with has closed their department for sponsorships. MWL is in touch with one student whose parents, already in debt on his account, are unable to support his second year of studies at the university, where he is pursuing his Masters in Economics. MWL has decided to sponsor this young student's university fees by raising alternative funds for this purpose, for one year. Meantime he is getting a job to pay for his own accommodation and other expenses. We are glad to honour our commitment by supporting this family in difficulty. We are fund raising for this venture so if you can help, please contribute through our Fund Raising page on the website: www.albaniahope.com.

The interns on MWL

This is the first year that MWL has hosted interns and up until now it has been an impressive experience. Two students from the Social Sciences University attended the induction into the work of MWL in developing community work for social transformation, prevention of human trafficking, and instruments and methods of work. The introduction to Mary Ward Loreto Foundation was made by the President, Imelda Poole IBVM. They have been attending the training of the MWL Women Leaders in Durres, with the topic of Broad Base Organizing and now are in the phase of getting introduced to the grass roots level work with women in the MWL centres in Lezha and Hot I ri, Shkoder. MWL Men and MWL youth have also trained interns to work in the field in the various developments taking place.



Leaders training on Broad Based Organizing

The Mary Ward Loreto Women project aims to empower women to take community actions and become active stakeholders in their communities, in order to provide hope, help, and change. Leaders from the women's groups in 5 areas of Albania attended a training on Broad Based Organizing, developed in Durres. At the end of the training, leaders from each area came out with specific issues to be addressed in order to promote self-sufficiency, to strengthen communities and to advocate for public policies. The next step is to organize the women's groups and the community to assess the needs and issues and to find a solution.



Networking in Lezha

Networking in Mary Ward Loreto is reflected at every level, starting from the management level and continuing to the project development areas in the communities where the MWL Women project operates. Networking is considered, in our everyday work, as very crucial since it contributes to making our work sustainable in regard to our partners. It also empowers the women with whom we work in the remote communities.

Networking with our partners and local governmental institutions helps us to deal with problems requiring collaborative action. The experience has shown that without co-operation with institutions and with other NGO's as well as with community members, it is hard to bring about our goal of social change. Therefore we work and collaborate closely with local stakeholders sharing the training experiences and searching for common interests in order to promote the empowerment of the vulnerable people with whom we work. We use networking as a means of addressing women's and girls' needs and try to improve state services for the most vulnerable and to empower our communities.



Opening of the craft Market in Valbona

One aspect of the business development of the women's social group MWL Women in Tropoje, was opening a wooden kiosk for selling handicraft products in Valbona. Valbona tourism is increasingly frequented by tourists from around the world, so the potential to pilot this initiative was recognised. For several months MWLW have been working to identify and secure the appropriate deal with the landowner, conducting research on the wooden model. This is now built and in place in Valbona. Already, interest is being shown and a sale of the products is really happening. MWL staff worked in groups to organize the opening day at a place called "Krojet e Rrogamit." In this craft kiosk, a woman entrepreneur sells a variety of crafts made by the women of Kalmet, such as jewelry, postcards, bags and purses, as well as hand-crafted cloth, such as children's clothing, T-shirts and other sewing accessories, kitchenware, candles, traditional dresses of the area, and plant products such as tea mountain. The strong point of this initiative is that we are not competing with other local vendors, because in Valbona there is no such service. Altogether there are 15 women who work to bring products required in the market. Quality and storing everything in Valbona will make this social business initiative very successful.



Stitching cards

The activity of stitched cards has known growth in terms of quality of this product and the expansion of the market in Shkodra, and abroad too. Cities like Tirana and Durres are on the list of next attempts to expand the market. The MWL Women's group came into the market with new patterns which proved to be successful, and the clients made many compliments to the women. There are two working groups, the one professional and the other beginners who are still learning. They come together every day in the centre, work together and support each other. A group of women, together with a key worker, are promoting and selling the cards in Shkodra. This helped them to get to know the market, types of clients, techniques of communication and marketing, and challenges as well. Not only the cards have been promoted, but the clients have also been introduced to MWL and its work on women's empowerment. This successful path has been a great motivator for the women, who are getting more active in the work, already considering it as a full-time job. Very positive dynamics exist among the women's group; they have become even more socialized and supportive of each other. The sense of belonging has increased.



Handicraft Market opening in the Archaeological Park of Apollonia

A Handicraft Market will be opened in the Archaeological Park of Apollonia, Fier. It is one of the major objectives of the group of the women of Fier. This market intends to economically empower the women through the promotion of craft skills. MWL women will sell to foreign customers who visit the Apollonia tourist site. Being a genuine economic enterprise, the road is difficult. All those factors which make a successful venture are addressed, starting with the product, the structure of the external legal procedures for opening a small business, marketing and understanding and meeting the needs of customers, based on the experience of the last fairs. The group of women, MWL Fier, expect a response from the Ministry of Culture to help them make a good start. The women are excited and are anxious to start as soon as possible. The tourist period only lasts for a few months. IF successful, it will be repeated each season.



For our final message, Mary Ward Loreto once again wishes you a very happy Summer time and a safe journey wherever you travel. If you are in Albania please come and join us in our UNGift Box Campaign. Follow us in FB Page MaryWardLoreto and the website www.albaniahope.com