

MWL Newsletter 7, July 2017

Introduction

There is an Albanian saying: 'Welcome is the best dish on the table'. Over the last month I have been the recipient of wonderful hospitality in many places and for this and always, for any person travelling, we are forever grateful. Throughout this time conversations have been flowing around innumerable tables, seeing beauty in the natural world in which we live, local story-telling, reminiscing and frequently joining the rest of the world in trying to find a solution to painful world issues. This week I am back to another reality here in Albania and have travelled to Saranda; here there is a stunning sea coast that is open to thousands of tourists every year. As in many other tourist parts of Albania, Mary Ward Loreto Women are extremely busy making crafts to be sold in the tourist markets as a way of welcoming the stranger to these shores and for economic empowerment. The question is: why are some of the most famous markets at heritage centres closed for these and many other industrious sellers who want to make Albania more welcoming by the beauty created at the hands of the people? In Butrint the British Foundation wrote in their contract that the local people were to be engaged in this centre. They desired this involvement as a matter of justice and to share local culture with the tourists. We have an election in two weeks. Is the nose in the ground by decision makers? Every year there is some problem created until eventually the markets are open – too late- but trade goes on. We continue to talk, to puzzle about such injustice.

Imelda Poole IBVM (President MWL)

Leadership Program at Lagje Mirdita, Durrës

Over the past month, the Leadership Group has led a number of very important Capacity Building training sessions: Learning how to work on Power Point Presentations, Communication Skills, Presentation Skills, Public Speaking and Identifying and Referring cases of Human Trafficking in their community, were some of the topics discussed on Fridays at Lagje Mirdia. Their second Social Activity took place at the end of the past month, offering food and clothing to a poor family next to their homes. It was a success for the leadership group, which tested and put in practice their organizational and fund-raising skills, in a minor way. At the moment, the group is preparing its third Social Activity; a full day in service of a vulnerable target group.



Better opportunities for young girls!

The MWLW Women's Group is engaged in a community awareness activity to gather together and to seek human rights from the local representatives and especially the right to information and the right to address the problems of the community. One of these issues is environmental pollution. This action will begin by the signing of two petitions. The Women's Group at the tailoring workshop has responded to an invitation to make bags for the Valbona souvenir shop. They also have new students in the tailoring course. The young girls of the group are participating in different fairs for the opening of the tourist season in Valbona.

E. is a 16 year old girl. She is from a village of Mirdita and her family lives there. She lives in Fier, Jaru, at her uncle's where she has come to attend high school studies to have a better education than she is able to access in her village in Mirdita. She studies in the second year at Levan's high school. Along with her cousin they have become active in the MWL center with a group of young girls training in handmade products, such as mosaics or photos on canvas. She



has also earned some money from her product sales.

Among the recent activities she has participated in two of the fairs held in Fier. Together with two other young girls, they had to deal with the sales and did it with great pleasure. During this activity it was even discovered that she had very good communication skills with clients and was capable of advertising and selling products, a skill she did not even know. E. is very happy that she lives in Fier and is active in MWL, because she has been given opportunities that she did not think she could be given in Mirdita. She has learned new things and wants to continue to learn and participate in other activities. She loves the subject of psychology in school and her dream is to continue her studies of psychology one day.

Looking for the truth!

"The true character of a man is not defined by what he does in front of a crowd but instead by what he does when no one else is around".

Especially during this election year we had the opportunity to see and hear a lot of "leaders" in every TV, Radio, in big meetings in our cities, but even in extremely remote villages. Reflecting about this with the team of MWLM, we came to the conclusion that the reality promoted by the Albanian society is really too far from the truth. If it had been true we would not have all these cases of emigration, violence in the family, abuse with drugs and alcohol, corruption and poverty, and trafficked people. And here comes the real crowd, the crowd of the victims, those who remain hidden in silence, the crowd whom these "Leaders" or men don't want to face. But we still live in hope, and we are stronger than ever, because we have been digging deeper than ever in this reality and mentality. Going to the doors of every community where we are, giving the message of change for a better life, for a better future for their children, a stronger economy and especially a safe family.

We can dream that our politicians will bring this change for free, we are sure that this change will come early if we work hard to make this happen, beginning with ourselves, not giving the responsibility to the others to make the first step.



Enjoying a fruitful day out with MWL Youth.

I would like to share one of the two days out organized by MWL youth even though both of them were really unforgettable experiences. Concretely, I would like to describe the activity we realized in Razma, (a very beautiful and tourist destination, close to Shkodra) with the youth of Puka Focus group. We traveled singing in the minibus until we arrived. Energizers and team building games helped the group to come closer. After we had eaten a tasty lunch, the group was split into two. Each of the new groups had to think and share ideas for a volunteer activity. At the end of the session they had to select one of their ideas and to develop it into a proper activity. They had to think about how to raise funds for its realization; with whom would they need to collaborate; and to specify the beneficiary target group.



Two activities were proposed by the mini groups: ***“A day with the elderly people”*** and ***“Giving doesn’t impoverish”***. The first idea was to develop an activity in collaboration with the Elderly Centre in Puka. The second idea was a charity initiative for people in need. The group selected the first initiative, because they found the second one too challenging. They agreed to work for 2 days collecting medical herbs as a group and all the income gathered would be used to cover the expenses of the activity. It was such a joyful day, and even a fruitful one, because the youth became engaged with the

purpose of animating a day with people, who would really appreciate their unconditional gift.

A Woman of Shendelli.

Being a woman in Albania means you have to face many hardships. This story relates to the women from an informal area created after the nineties. These women are working very hard to establish handcraft businesses which they are hoping will provide a possibility for them to sell the goods near a very attractive tourist area. After 3 years of great effort and hard work and the support of MWL Women’s project, the women are now making good quality handcrafts and could earn a descent income during the summer season. The state authorities and the bureaucracy are a major obstacle to the women and not only the state. Recently, the women who are ready for the tourist market, were not allowed to sell their products even though they were the ones who established this market. After a lot of discussions, lobbying, involving the press and many meetings as follow up work, this concern is temporarily solved but it still needs to be followed up.



This is all about women and women’s empowerment. The women do not give up because they believe in what they can do. This is a real success and gives us hope that women have the power to change things. We never have to give up in the struggle for human rights.

UN.GIFT Box in Tirana – An Anti-Human Trafficking Campaign took place again this year from 30th of May to 1st of June.

This Campaign is in cooperation with URAT Network and Minister of Interior. The purpose of this activity is to raise awareness to the Albanian population about the dangers of Human Trafficking and to help vulnerable communities to protect themselves from the traffickers and to understand better the ways in which survivors of trafficking are helped to re-integrate into society. UN.GIFT Box awareness campaign in Tirana finished on 1st of June, having received the youngest audience in its history, while in Albania. Focusing on the Children's Day celebrations was also a Flash Mob Dance organized by "Different & Equal", part of the URAT Network.

The atmosphere around the Box was filled with notes against trafficking and boys and girls wearing T-shirts holding the referral phone number. In these three days, the Box was visited **by 200 people, 100+ of them were youngsters, mostly high-school and middle school children.** This was in honor of all disappeared and trafficked children. Mary Ward Loreto and URAT was represented in the morning, on National Television, by Sara Çapaliku, MWL Youth Trainer. She introduced the work and the public awareness initiatives against Trafficking in Human Persons.



Human Anti-Trafficking Trainings



Up to now, awareness raising information on Human Anti-trafficking has been delivered in 14 areas of the country, reaching out to 350 youngsters. Each of the groups in these targeted areas undergo two other training sessions with MWL Youth Psychologist Trainer. Lately, MWL Youth has been working closely with Vocational Training Schools, in Korce and Shkoder, which are mostly frequented by boys.

A point to be highlighted about holding trainings in such areas and having direct communication with youth and institutions, is the advantage of receiving immediate information regarding cases of trafficking in these communities and being a bridge between youth and the referral mechanism. During these past months it was noticed that MWL Youth presence there is perceived as a link to hope. Besides cases of potential victims and actual victims reported to us, our Psychologist Trainer has assisted youngsters who have contacted her, discussing different social and psychological issues which were difficult for them to handle alone.

Progress of businesses.

“Women in time to come will do much...” Mary Ward



Setting up a business is not an easy undertaking especially in the Albanian reality where the state doesn't provide facilities. It becomes more challenging especially when you start from scratch. Starting from scratch means that the women lacked the skills and that meant that MWL women project had to start with vocational trainings made available to the women. After going through the training process, the idea of women being involved in business came as a necessity. The women wanted to do more. They wanted to change their lives and longed to change their situation as rural

women. Women have started this journey and actually they are learning to walk together with the support of MWL. MWL women project is working with women in the social, human and economical aspect and we believe that women who are empowered become solutions to poverty, poor health and vulnerability for their families and within their communities. The project efforts are trying to make a reality. **Mary Ward said: “Women in time to come will do much.”**

Step by step...

As Nelson Mandela says, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

MWL Men with the training program is using the full potential to make this change happen. Since the beginning of 2017 we started with training groups of men in facing the issue of domestic violence, we were surprised by the participation and collaboration of the men. We cannot say that we have stopped domestic violence in these communities, but we can say that observing the news with the cases of domestic violence, also information from our key persons in these communities, none of them happened in these communities, and unfortunately the fact is that the media is full of cases every day. The facts are strong and sometime they look even strange. We found some men drinking alcohol whilst waiting for us to start the training on abuse and dependencies related to alcohol.



We are happy to say that this has changed and we have had a positive feedback even for other trainings that we have led such as: positive parenting, property legalization related to agriculture, medicinal herbs. It looks like it has been easy to develop these trainings; however, this is not true at all. This positive trend happened only because of the wonderful collaboration and hard work of the staff from all the projects of MWL. **To conclude with Aristotle who said; the roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.**

The development of MWL Women Project in Hot I Ri and the Celebration of Children`s day.

The MWL Women in Hot I Ri Centre have already created a very positive reputation in the community and in the network, thanks to the MWL support, its unique model, for its ethics at work and most importantly, for the cause for which we work, prevention of human trafficking. MWL now, for women and girls, is like a healthy home, comfortable, warm, where they have touched the opportunity to grow and become empowered every day. They are good representatives of knowledge and culture in the family and community. This change is noticed, there are many cases from the community who trust us to rely on the various problems they have, this is the result of the work and support that MWL has done so far in this area. We are facing different social, health and economic cases every day.

On June 1st we celebrated the national children's day in our center. We organized an activity with parents and children. We shared gifts and sweets that were distributed to 25 women's children, from 0-14 years of age. The entire fund was donated by the director of the Albanian post, Estela and her colleagues Ambra. The kids, together with their mothers, spent beautiful moments in the center, where they recited stories and told fables. It was a very happy day.



Staff training: Domestic Violence: Implementation of Law

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MWLW in Tropoje Update (Including a story)

The start of the summer season brings "revival" not only for nature and warm weather, but also for the activities in the MWLW Tropoja project. In May, for the second year, the MWLW women's group opened a handicraft shop in Valbona. Motivated and with the desire to bring change in their lives and of the community, these women have realized various handicraft products such as: embroidered postcards, jewelry and other accessories with beads, various works done in the loom, accessory and personalized embroidery, wool work.

For tourists who want to "take away a part" of Valbona, this shop offers some personalized products for the tourist area. These are made by local women. MWL Women also participated in the fair that Municipality Bajram Curri organised for the opening of the tourist season. MWL Women presented their products and received congratulations for their handicrafts as a value which added to the culture of the area.



ANDANTE STUDY DAYS: AN OLD CRIME IN NEW FORMS: MODERN SLAVERY

An international event, which gathered 52 delegates from 13 countries of Europe, took place in Durres, Albania, from the 3rd till the 8th of May, 2017.

ANDANTE, the European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organizations, organized this event in partnership with RENATE to have a common understanding on modern slavery. Also they wanted to build their mandate and to consolidate their efforts against this horrible crime. Representatives of RENATE and MWL FOUNDATION have been present during these days and shared with the participants their experience on the fight against human trafficking.



The visits in the work places of the MWL Foundation and its partners (Different and Equal NGO and Community Centre Little Angels) was so important in touching the reality of vulnerable peoples who have made or can make a person a potential victim of trafficking.

As a reflection, I would like to share with you dear reader, the words of the 2 co-presidents of Andante: "It is very important that Catholic women in Europe also take part in the fight against this crime which is devastating the lives of so many women, children and men", - said Mary McHugh and Vroni Peterhans, Presidents of Andante.

Do you know where I am?

Monday morning, both hands loaded with snacks, drinks and authorizations, waiting with a group of very tired family members of prisoners, waiting to be controlled by the personnel and to enter to meet the group, in the Church, inside the prison, I read a big note, painted in an unpainted wall which said: Prisoners are deprived of; 1- Freedom of Speech, 2-Freedom of assembly, 3- The freedom of having a private life, 3- Freedom of movement. I was thinking to myself, what kind of life would that be? Sometimes, I think that I need them more than they need me.

MWL Men has a weekly presence in the prison, and is trying to bring a bit of hope and courage to that dark place, full of young dreamers, who try to succeed in life without having a good example of how to do it, and who can only just about breathe. We make a reflection in the group about this and one of the guys who reads a lot said; they try to bury us. They didn't know we were seeds...But still we live in hope. MWL is going to follow them in their difficult journey and to plant hope even in the hardest lands.



RENATE Training in Netherland: Refugees & Migration\Lobbying and Campaign.

For six days, 19-25th March, 2017, Mary Ward Loreto participated in the RENATE training on Refugees & Migration/Lobbying and Campaign, in the Netherlands. It was facilitated and organised by RENATE member, Ivonne Van de Kar. The training was attended by twenty-nine members of RENATE, two of whom were MWL staff. Many professionals shared their experience and working practices with us, in the context of a huge influx of migrants in the western countries of Europe. Discussions pointed out cases of trafficking amongst refugees and new conflicts, problematic issues that these countries are facing at the moment. Social workers, Refugees' Shelter workers, Victims' Shelter workers, Police staff, and others, guided us through the legal procedures, their daily working struggles and successful stories in the Netherlands, handling the new wave of exploitative and trafficked refugees/migrants.

Some of the topics of the Training:



Understanding the distinctions between 'Trafficking,' 'Smuggling,' 'Fraud' and 'Grey areas,' and the complexities therein; The influence of the media and how it might be harnessed positively as means of awareness-raising; The practicalities of offering shelter and support in the Netherlands, to victims and survivors; Forgiveness as a means of healing; The Right to Protect; The complexities of considerations underpinning the Safe Return/Voluntary Return program; The impacts of EU legislation and international legal frameworks on humanitarian actors, who are often deterred from providing assistance, as a result of the consequences of such legislation and frameworks; Experiential learning at the SPEK Centre in

The Hague – introduction to ecumenical projects for refugees and undocumented people at the Centre for refugee, by representatives of the Dutch Council for Refugees.

Advice Centre in Tirana

Mary Ward Loreto Women's Advice Centre in Tirana, ACT, has now consolidated its services to women/clients at ACT, and have expanded and strengthened the network with service offers, and have responded to invitations from service providers to lead trainings on human development, with existing women's groups who are managed by religious in Tirana. In order to provide comprehensive support to the clients, and to orientate them correctly and effectively towards services they need to access, we have improved the referral system. 31 women/clients who approached to ACT have already received support and advice on "Where do I go? What do I say? What do I do?" and are being followed up. MWL Women ACT is already seen as a good service by NGO-s, institutions, who refer cases to ACT for comprehensive support and invited us to be part of the multidisciplinary working groups. We care for our clients feeling satisfied by our service, building hope, ACT have opened new opportunities for them, and have increased solidarity. Women refer other women to ACT, and this is a very positive feedback to have received in these 3 months. Frequenting the service at MWLW ACT, these women felt stronger, clear, supported, and encouraged, to deal with their issues.

Referred cases at the ACT centre.

Now there are increased cases needing employment. It is a challenge because sometimes there are difficulties referring them for appropriate work. It is difficult to influence the bureaucratic people at the employment office. Recently, at least 3 women who approached the ACT Office were going through life crisis, needing food packages. In some cases, women have different problems like domestic violence, divorce, their need is legal aid. These cases we refer to our partners to provide free legal aid. Sometimes, when they are in the process they back out and don't finish the process at the service. One case that has been treated by ACT was a potential/victim of trafficking. Firstly, we and her family referred her to the police and after some procedures she is sheltered in a public shelter. Furthermore concrete support for women's issues have been offered at ACT, such as counselling, psychological assessment, support for the women at risk for life with medications and emergency support for women going through life crisis.

EU Civil Society Platform

Mary Ward Loreto, represented by Irena Kraja, attended the "9th Meeting of the EU Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Human Beings" organized by "European Commission" in Brussels. The aim of this meeting was further development of the EU Strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings. Civil Societies from countries in Europe were brought together and invited to have a voice in relation to this issue. These are the direct key actors in combating human trafficking, and they offer their contribution towards creating policies for prevention, protection of the victims, prosecution of the traffickers, and tackling this phenomena.



Due to previous meetings, areas identified for further discussions were: 1) Access to assistance, support and protection, 2) Access to remedies, non-punishment, compensation, 3) Focused action to combat violence against women. Three workshops were developed in relation to the points raised. Mary Ward Loreto attended the workshop on "Access to Assistance, Support, and Protection" since this might help during the direct work in the field, and this was seen as a challenge.

Friends of Mary Ward from all over the world will gather in York, from 7th to 12th August, 2017.

The second Mary Ward Lay Conference, organized by the CJ English Province and Friends of Mary Ward will take place in York, this summer. This event will bring together lay friends of Mary Ward from all over the world and four Mary Ward Friends from Albania will join this event. Sr Imelda Poole (IBVM), will be one of the keynote speakers.



We will listen to the experts on 'Mary Ward, Prophetic Woman'. There will be times for group discussion, visits to Mary Ward places such as the Bar Convent, York Minster, Mulwith, Ripley Castle, Bishop Thornton, Mt Grace and Osbaldwick. There will be a time for meeting and making friends, and time to reflect on who is Mary Ward, the Prophetic Woman for us today.

Travels

Over the last month the call to speak on behalf of RENATE and Mary Ward Loreto about human trafficking and the issues surrounding this crime against humanity, has been the agenda for Imelda in the UK and Canada. The RENATE film was shown in several places and had a huge impact leading to the development of anti-trafficking groups, many questions and the growing desire on the part of many, to respond more dynamically in the global fight against this crime. In one part of the UK there was a tangible awakening to the fact that trafficking is happening on their doorsteps and eyes had been closed.

In Toronto, as in many big cities, the collaborative work to bring about justice for those bought and sold, and the need to punish the perpetrators, was being confronted with significant joined-up approaches. We have much to learn from each other.

The inspiration came from the elders of the indigenous tribes of Canada who reflected quietly but with such deep passion, on the injustice which stemmed from unacceptable desires for ownership of the land. They spoke, with such painful sharing, of the lost children.

Trafficking happens in many forms and we do need to weep at such horror in the face of our global reality today.



More at: <https://www.catholicregister.org/item/25249-canada-a-primary-target-for-human-trafficking>

The launching of the research: “Ethics in the Education System in Albania” and the impact that had throughout Albania.

MWL Education Project published the research work called: ‘Ethics in the Education System in Albania’, on 13 April 2017, where more than 250 participants took part at Hotel Tirana International, for the conference devoted to the findings of the nationwide research study. Thank you to Mrs. Nora Malaj, Deputy Minister of Education and Sports, Zef Preci and the Researchers from ACER, the Coordinator of the project: Gerda Sula and the Board of MWL Education who led this work to its completion. We are grateful to all for such great collaboration throughout this process. The research study had a great Impact. Mrs. Nora Malaj organized a round table with representatives from the Education ministry outreach and shared the research. The study will be distributed to all institutions. The ACER Company have shared it with all domestic and foreign institutions. Leaders of faculties around Albania have invited us to introduce the findings to their students. Many professors have shown interest to integrate the findings into ethical issues, evaluation and activities. The students of sociology in the Faculty of Social Sciences, in the subject of sociology of education, had a two hour presentation on the study research. Many other student requested permission to use data of this research for different projects related to ethics in education. In Finland there will be a meeting, which is focused on research projects in education. Mrs. Shpresa Deliaj who sits on the MWL Education Board, will present the findings of the research at this meeting.

Please click below to read the study report “Ethics in the Education System in Albania” in English: <http://www.albaniahope.com/albanian-education/the-launching-of-the-research-ethics-in-the-education-system-in-albania/>



Service -Learning at Rogacionist's High School in Lezhe.

Edlira Gjoni, an expert in this field, provided the training for all the pedagogical staff of the school where this approach and the benefits it has to the school students, education system and the community was introduced. It is a new methodology that tries to combine the learning process in the classroom with the work in the community. It is aiming to promote active engagement, to improve the leadership skills of students in solving real problems in the community. This will be through a project which will come from the students themselves. Besides the above, this project aims to reduce stereotypes and promote open intercultural understanding. It is just the start and the real implementation will begin in September 2017.

This is always wonderful news! Two new babies for two of the MWL staff!

***We're all excited for you, and truly thankful that your new babies arrived safe and healthy.
Praying for joy, health, peace and some quiet nights for your family.***

Welcome to the world, Baby Eloi and Isla!