



Empowering through Freedom, Justice and Sincerity

Mary Ward Loreto Youth Project

Annual Report

October 2016 – September 2017



Introduction

In terms of project achievements this year has been a new journey for MWL Youth. Due to the difficult terrain, often for the youth group it is almost impossible to be aware of their potential or “thinking outside the box” for enriching their experiences and solving different situation. To overcome this, we built interactive and innovative training modules and methods. By introducing them with different realities through videos, stories and open discussions, we helped them to become more aware of their potential and resources.

Considering the tendency of migration of most of the population towards the capital, the majority of the suburban areas are left empty and with a minimum of young age. This has left these youngsters in marginalized areas, experiencing hopelessness and loneliness, believing that they are incapable of accomplishing their dreams, which leads to the increase of the vulnerability towards any false promise or fake opportunities and as a consequence, make them more exposed to any form of exploitation including human trafficking. To overcome this, during the trainings and frequent meetings with the youth groups, role models are presented to them, to increase their hope and motivation. Also, by doing day out-s together, they have created social networks to help them overcome their weakness. To get over the fear of possible unemployment and to encourage the focus group to take entrepreneurship initiatives, we support them with professional tool kits.

However, sometimes, due to the emergency cases of their economic needs we had a few drop outs in different focus areas. In order for this not to get repeated, we are using as a model of hope our 3 focus groups from the previous year, which we are followed up. They introduced the programme to the new youth and we will keep this best practice even in the future.

We have assisted 4 young people of the previous year to get employed. Now, they are 23 young people employed throughout the MWL youth programme from the previous year. We distributed 7 tool kits for these youth and organized a Day out by gathering and sharing a day together.

Leadership is our pilot model of empowering youngsters to become leaders of themselves and their communities, to get past the fear of isolation, their hope in emigration and lack of opportunities.

Throughout this reporting period one of the concerns of the project has been the human and economic empowerment of 44 youth in 2 focus groups. This component was led by the project manager.

It also included a training programme for the focus groups and also groups of young people across 17 regions of Albania. These trainings were led by the MWL Youth trainer and a MWL employed psychologist assisted in this work, when a specialist trainer was required.

1314 has been the participation of young people in 17 areas of Albania attending three topics: Human Anti-trafficking, “Communication Skills” and “Emotional and mental health”.

Main activities

The journey made towards employment:

Follow up with youth of the previous year

Youth, who had been part of the project last year, are constantly kept in touch. We communicate and advise them about any job opportunity. Also they have been involved in the first meeting with the new young people who are now part of the programme to introduce the project and testify and invite youth to join the project. 4 young people of the previous year have been employed and a Social activity was organized with them.



Day out with Youth of previous year's programme

The activities realized with the 2 Focus groups (Puka and Lushnja)

48 young people were interviewed and started the programme. 4 of them left the programme before starting the vocational training and another 3 dropped out without concluding the vocational training course. 41 of 43 young people, concluded the vocational training, did work experience due to collaboration with businesses. 38 of them received tool kits (3 of young people from Puka Focus group didn't receive because they have done the vocational training course for Tourism Services and it was not a tool kit possible to offer according to their formation). The 2 youth interrupted the formation and did not finish the vocational training due to emigration. 24 of the youth are employed till the end of this year. We are still following up and we are in process to find other opportunities for the others and hopefully we will meet our target to employ at least 7 youngsters who would increase the number to 31 still the half of the future year which will be 75% of them employed.



Signing the Contract with Youth



Meeting in the Vocational training Centre in Fier



Tool kits delivered to youth

Two days out and 2 voluntary activities were realized with the youth of the Focus groups. The group of Lushnja decided to go in Gjinar (close to Elbasan) and the youth of Puka decided to go in Razma. During this day they got involved in a group session to think and choose about the voluntary activity they wanted to offer in their communities. At the end of the days the groups decided:

- *To spend a day cooking, playing and bonding with elderly people in Puka,- this was the activity thought by youth of Puka*
- *To organize a special day for Roma children in Lushnja, - this was the activity proposed by the youth of Lushnja Focus Group.*

The youth of the 2 focus groups had the opportunity to participate on the followed themes of “Human and Economic Development Trainings”:

- *“Different and Equal”- a training on self-acceptance and against any form of discrimination;*
- *“Learn entrepreneurship”- a training on entrepreneurship and business issues.*
- *“Job Search” – a training on assisting young people to build their CV, write a letter of interest and approach the job interview.*



Learn Entrepreneurship and Job search training in Valbona

Challenges: It is really challenging to work with 2 different groups with specific local issues and at the same time to have individual answers for each participant. But through the 2 ad hoc Facilitators it has been much easier to be more close to the needs and the daily developments of youth.

It is challenging also to plan and calculate the starting of the Vocational Training Courses, because of delays from the Centers in opening those courses. As the starting of one course depends on the demand that there is for it, there are no fixed dates.

Keeping these young people motivated and involved in a project is very challenging, as they wish to always find quick solutions. Sometimes, even making them participate in different activities can be hard, because they might not be aware of the benefits of these voluntary activities.

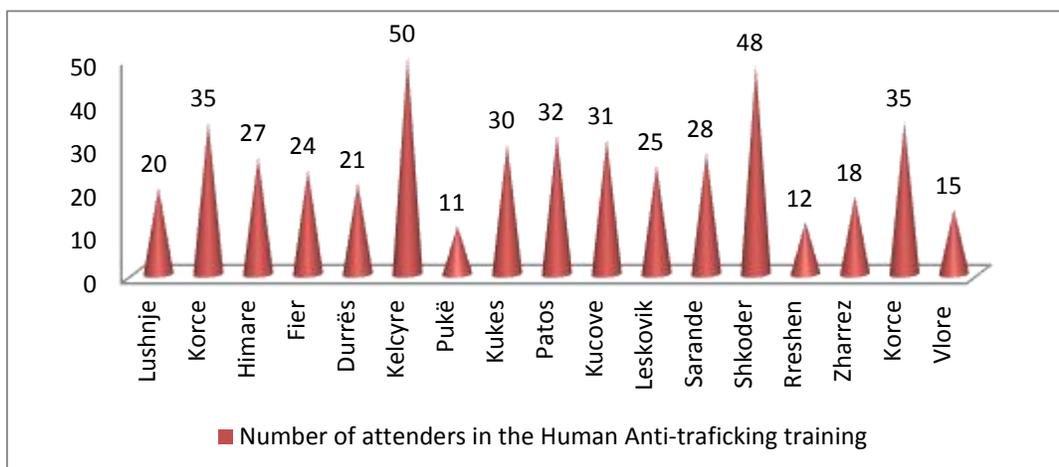
Another challenge is to find collaboration with enterprises that are willing to accept young people for working experience. Lots of businesses claim that they have not much work to offer. Others pretend to get paid for accepting them as interns.

Training Programme of the MWL Youth Project

MWL Youth Human Anti-trafficking Training developments:

17 training sessions on the topic of Human Anti-trafficking have been delivered in 1 year from MWL Youth project. 430 youngsters, ages 15 to 25 have been informed about the issue and have received the tools and knowledge to prevent trafficking in human beings. MWL Youth team has worked on developing new strategies and models of training to adjust to the needs and simplify the awareness raising “tool-kit”, provided in 17 villages and towns around Albania. An improved version and updated module has been produced by the MWL YOUTH trainer to open up to new training methodology, consisting of interactive games, brainstorming activities, theoretical legal information, psychological games, practical instructions, etc. as well as, using awareness raising videos, interpretation and reflection through visual images and encouraging group discussion. MWL Youth was also invited by Public Institutions and NGO-s to train staff and volunteers Against Trafficking in Human Beings. In these cases, MWL Youth Trainer remodelled the training modules according to the new and older audience.

Illustrative table of the Human Anti-trafficking Training Sessions:



MWL Youth increased the number of targeted areas and therefore, targeted youth groups, as an answer to many requests coming from schools and institutions, which had not been in our focus during the 1st year. We added staff to help with the expanded visibility of our Foundation/Project and we intensified our field work. In terms of figures, now we have reached a higher number of beneficiaries, through the Human Anti-trafficking Training sessions. Meanwhile, cases of trafficking have been referred to us and this was an unexpected result of these trainings.



Human Anti-trafficking Trainings with youth groups

Challenges: Main challenge in delivering trainings in many areas of the country was to create a sustainable network of stakeholders, such as schools, local partners, NGO-s, state institutions, etc. and building trust in communities. The fact that NGO-s suffer from negative public reputation in Albania was identified as a problem. This was overcome by being seriously and continuously engaged in collaborating with them, answering their needs and requests, being correct in terms of official bureaucracy, keeping them updated with our work (reports, e-mails, etc.)

MWL Youth “Communication Skills” and “Emotional and Mental Health” Training developments:

This season has been one of the most dynamic ever for MWL Youth training program. During this year we have been present in 17 vulnerable areas of Albania from North to South and we realized 33 Trainings on the topic of “Mental and Emotional Health” and “Communication Skills”. From area to area the feedback from youngsters was very impressive and challenging at the same time. Our main partners were high school institutions and for that reason youngsters that we have reached are not only empowered against Human Trafficking but also are our main leaders in spreading the word for justice and building healthy communities. The aim of Mental and Emotional Health training was to help youngsters to take time and reflect on their thoughts, feelings and actions. Using psychosocial games and interactive debates, groups are invited to be part of role plays also playing scenarios of real life emotional struggles, in order to learn how to deal with distress. They are inspired to set goals and create strategies that help mental and emotional wellbeing. Communication skills training aims to provide the beneficiaries with tools on how to improve their communications style, depending on different situations. The outcome of this training was empowering them in how to use communication skills as a unique value against vulnerability towards Human Trafficking. They were helped to identify their communication style and were helped to create a strategy for improving communication. Beneficiaries were helped to build awareness of lateral thinking and providing assertiveness as a technique towards traditional thinking on authority complex.



“Communication Skills” and “Mental and Emotional Health” Trainings with youth groups

Mental and Emotional Health Training:



17 Areas

- We had planned 15 areas from North to South, we have been invited in 2 more



450 youngsters

- In total we have reached 450 youngsters
- 450 youngsters were provided with techniques how to manage emotional status and thinking process



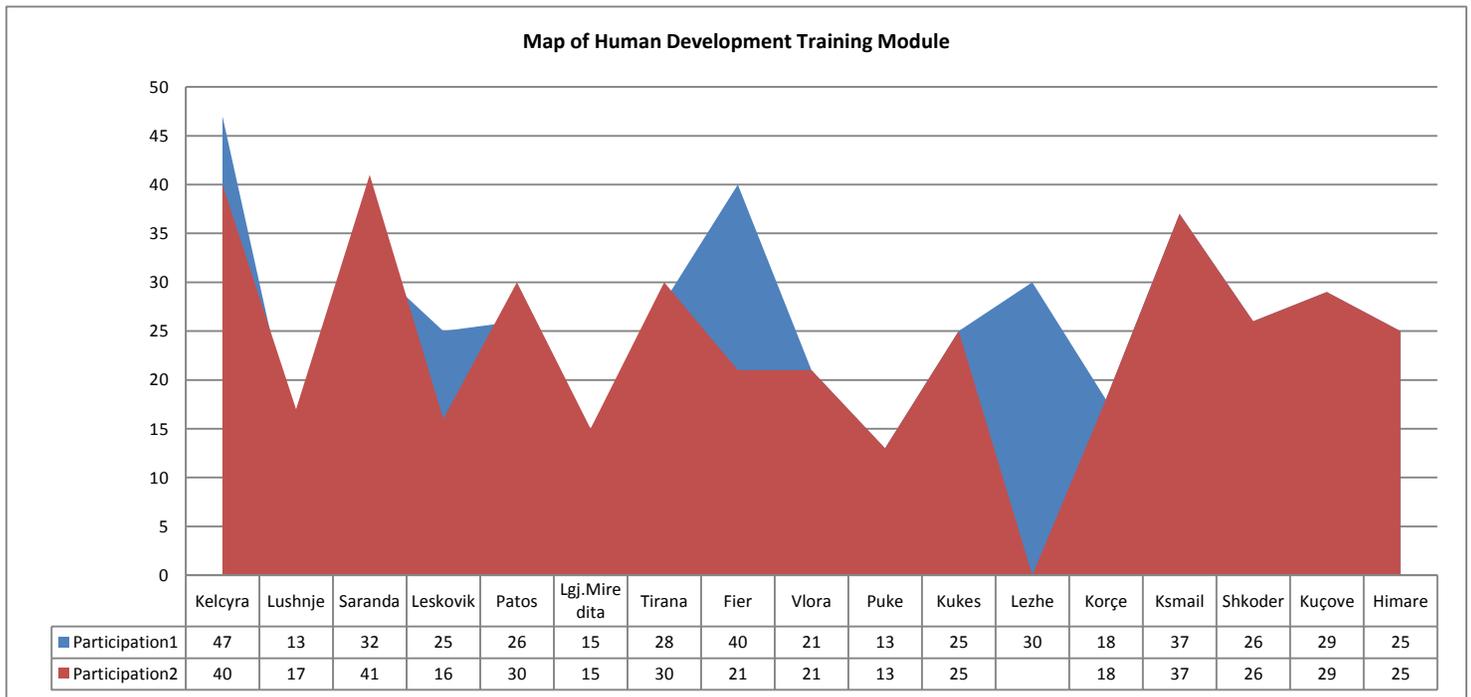
Average age 16

- The average age of youth groups is 16.

Communication Skills Training:



In the chart below, titled: Map of Human Development Training Module, you can see the commitment of youth in 17 regions for Mental and Emotional Health Training demonstrated in the chart as Participation 1 and in 16 regions for Communication Skills Training demonstrated as Participation 2. The peak of commitment has been reached in Kelcyra with 47 youngsters present. This session has even been used as a test for the trainer to pilot the methodology of the training, and facilitate also the MWL Youth manager to bond with the group as it was considered as focus group for the sustainable support approach.



Challenges:

Talking freely about truth and what concern us inside is one of the most difficult things to do with youngsters in Albania because first of all they didn't had the chance before to stop and think for themselves. Breaking taboos and helping them to become aware of their values and their potential to achieve their dreams, it is another challenge because it motivates them to push their limits and act outside their comfort zone.

Taking initiatives in a community where hope is already dead and thinking outside the box, it's one of the hardest things to do but at the same time the most powerful change. Changing it is painful and opening new windows to think and see the world is inspiring but it seeks a huge engagement from youngsters that sometimes takes time.

Improving communication skills is another challenging initiative because it invites youngsters to break the stereotypes of traditional thinking and approach to things.

Sometimes small communities are more difficult to be open and collaborate freely

MWL Youth Leadership Programme

This year marked the beginning of a new, exciting pilot programme, integrated within the Youth Project. In the Youth Need's Research conducted by MWL Youth, it emphasized the lack of intellectual space for youngsters to grow their potential and become aware of it. By this programme, MWL aims to succeed in offering this missing opportunity, especially to those in need, who do not have means or access to receive the knowledge, information, etc. Becoming aware of that "leader spirit" within themselves, that could drive this marginalized youth towards small and big changes in their community, would be one of the results of this programme. The second and final stage of implementation consists in building Youth Centers, led by the youth itself.

MWL Youth began the programme with the youth of "Lagje Mirdita", peripheral rural area of Durres. Starting from November 2016, 15 boys and girls were identified (based on their intellectual skills) as beneficiaries. They were picked from two different sites - both very vulnerable, poor and marginalized. The identification process was led by the Youth Manager in collaboration with MWL local partner- priest of the church in Lagje Mirdita. The implementation work took place since December 2016 and until now, 16 training sessions and workshops, 2 days out, 2 movie days and 2 social actions in the community took place, as part of the programme agenda.

Human Development and Leadership Training topics delivered with MWL Leadership group: "What is Leadership?"; "What makes a good Leader?"; "Decision Making"; "Critical Thinking"; "Listening Skills"; "Conflict Resolution"; "Human Anti-trafficking and how to address it"; "Social Activities – Brainstorming and Organizing"; "Presentation Skills"; "How to write a CV"; "Public Speaking"; "Safe Internet and Bullying".

Challenges: The main problem MWL Youth faced with the Leadership Programme was in the identification process of the targeted youth. The identification was done in collaboration with two local partners, who were meant to refer to us the "wanted" individuals (based on our selection criteria). The group that was handed to MWL Youth had bigger needs in terms of their own Human Development. We overcome this "unexpected situation" through being flexible in our Leadership Training Module and methodology in accordance with the socio-economic characteristics of the area and youth's vulnerability and needs. There were adjustments done in

MWL Youth Leadership Programme Training Module according to the characteristics of the Leadership Group and the project's timeline was extended, in order to reach its important goal. In terms of timeline, there was a delay in starting to implement the Leadership Programme. This was an unexpected result, depending on our local partners.



Moments from activities with Leadership group in Lagje Mirdita

Guitar course in D&E Education centre for rescued girls

During this period, 34 sessions have been conducted with the rescued girls from trafficking to enable them to follow a guitar course. The girls enjoyed participating in the lessons.

Usually there are four to five girls who frequent the course, however they are not always the same girls who regularly participate. The maximum number of girls has been 6 and the minimum 2 girls. The main lessons have focused on:

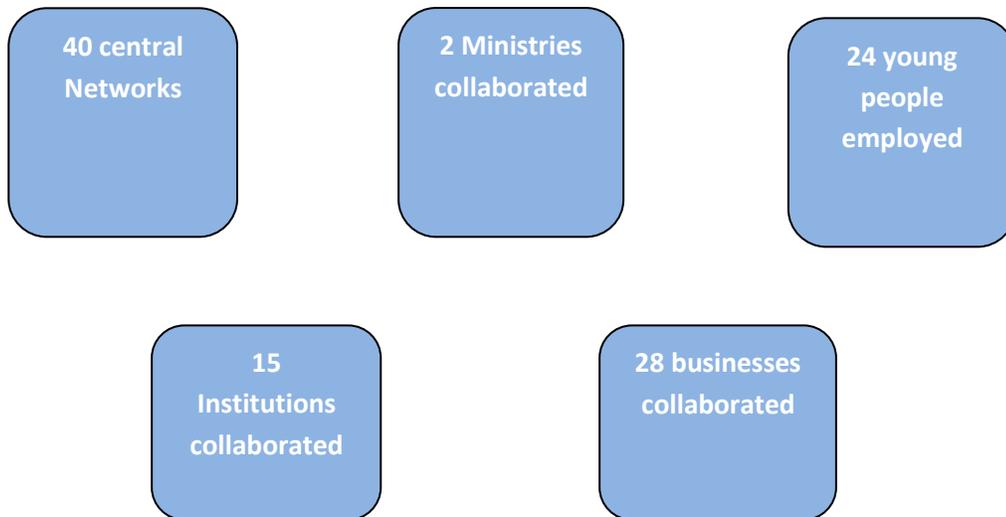
- Learning the notes of the strings on the guitar.
- Co-ordination and usage of both hands.
- Compilation of the chords.
- Following the main rhythms of 4/4 and 3/4 times and basic arpeggio.

Results in numbers

Measured Results of MWL Youth Project

Networking and systemic change:

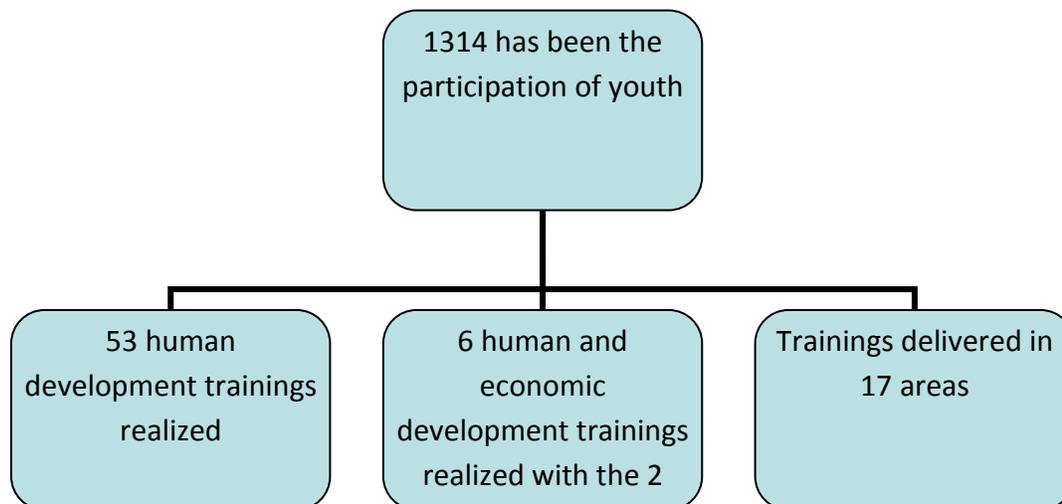
- 40 central and local institutions involved in Networking and for systemic change for the youth in Albania
- 2 Ministries collaborated for the development of the project
- 24 young people employed.
- 15 institutions collaborated for the development of the project, including the 3 parishes of Puka, Lushnja and Durres, the employment offices and the vocational schools in these regions.
- 28 businesses collaborated in the trainings and through them the work experience for the youth is provided



Human Development Trainings:

1314 people participated in 50 Human Development Trainings developed

- 53 Human Development trainings realized in 17 areas
- 6 human development Trainings for the 43 youth of the 2 Focus Groups realized



URAT Network and UN GIFT Box Campaign:

URAT Network is well established and + 16,000 people from 4 areas of Albania are aware of the risks of Human trafficking through the UN GIFT Box Campaign.

- 10 URAT Network meetings were held.
- 2173 people were interested and got information on Human Trafficking issue in 2 cities becoming more aware about modern day slavery through the UN gift Box Campaign in Tirana on the 30th of May and 1st of June¹ and in Shengjin Beach on the 30th and 31st of July²
- 20 institutions were involved in the UN GIFT BOX Campaign
- The International Day of Prayer and Reflection Against Trafficking in Persons³ was organised and a film was produced by the Network

¹ <http://www.albaniahope.com/uncategorized/un-gift-box-in-tirana-an-anti-human-trafficking-campaign-took-place-again-this-year-from-30th-of-may-to-1st-of-june/>

² <http://www.albaniahope.com/anti-people-trafficking/art-for-freedom-an-awareness-raising-campaign-against-human-trafficking-on-july-30-2017/>

³ <http://www.albaniahope.com/anti-people-trafficking/8th-february-st-josephine-bakhita-international-day-of-prayer-and-reflection-against-trafficking-in-persons-they-are-just-children-not-slaves/>

Focus Groups Approach:

43 young people from 2 areas (Puka and Lushnja) have been part of the MWL Youth project. 41 of them had finished a vocational training; They received the necessary tools and the life skills for entering in the labour market and have perspectives for their future in Albania.

48 young people were interviewed and started the programme. (4 of them dropped out before starting the vocational training course and 3 others have dropped out because they didn't finish the vocational training)

41 young people successfully finished the vocational training courses of their choice. All of them did work experience

62 group sessions realized in 2 areas with the youth.

172 personal meetings realized with youth.

24 young people are employed from this year's youth from the 2 Focus groups and 4 from the previous ones.

45 tool kits were purchased for Youth (38 for the youth of this year's Focus groups and 7 for the youth of the previous focus groups).

2 voluntary activities led by young people, realized in Puka and Lushnja with elderly people and Roma children. There were present 23 elderly people and 30 children.

An Awarding Ceremony was realized in Tirana. 41 young people received MWL Certificates.

Steps and future progress

- Follow up and assistance for the Youth of last year's Focus groups.
- To identify 20 young people for each of the three areas (Puka, Lushnja and Durres peripheral region - Kenate) to be part of the programme.
- To go on with the Training on Leadership for 15 young people from Durres.
- To develop new training modules for Human Development Training Programme
- Continue to open up new training programmes against trafficking in human persons.
- To plan and co-organize with the URAT Network members the UN GIFT Box usage extended to many other areas by renting it to interested partners.
- To build the concept of the Youth centre.
- To realize the Market Research.

Report's Author
Gazmir Memaj
MWL YOUTH Manager