



# **Anti-trafficking organisations in Albania**

A guide to service providers and  
programmes fighting human trafficking

2024

# Table of Contents

**02** Introduction

**03** Different & Equal

**05** Mary Ward Loreto Albania

**07** National Association Education for Life - SHKEJ

**09** Nisma per Ndryshim Shoqeror ARSIS

**11** Tjeter Vizion

**13** "Vatra" Psycho Social Centre

**15** Medaille Trust Presence in Albania

**17** Papa Xhovani Community Albania

**19** World Vision Albania

**21** Acknowledgements

# Introduction

Albania is a global hotspot for human trafficking, with an estimated 34,000 people currently enslaved. Patriarchal norms make women and girls especially vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation. Complex criminal networks exploit Albania's high levels of poverty and corruption, rendering Albanians one of the largest groups of foreign trafficked victims in the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe.

As treatment of Albanian victims becomes increasingly harsh and politicised throughout the continent, it is critical that victims, including those vulnerable to re-trafficking, are protected at source.

Despite the inadequate response from the Albanian state to combat human trafficking and exploitation, a resilient group of NGOs within the United Response Against Trafficking (URAT) Network have combined over two decades of expertise in delivering extensive rehabilitation, reintegration, and prevention services for victims of trafficking and vulnerable communities.

Their multidisciplinary team comprises dedicated case managers, medical professionals, psychologists, educators, legal experts, economic empowerment specialists, shelter administrators, and reintegration coordinators.

This creative brief presents the strengths of the anti trafficking NGOs in Albania in their fight against human trafficking.

There are a variety of needs and challenges, but Arise is hopeful, and looking forward to supporting further the work of organisations working on the ground.

Our overarching aim is to further support the sustainable growth and effectiveness of our network, so that frontline groups can continue to build resilience to human trafficking in high-risk communities for years to come.

# Different & Equal

Different & Equal (D&E) is a nonprofit organisation in Albania, established in 2004 to provide high-quality reintegration services for victims of trafficking, exploitation, and abuse. It also seeks to improve the legal, institutional and social capacity to prevent and counter human rights violations.

They operate with a multidisciplinary staff that includes case managers, doctors, psychologists, teachers, lawyers, economic empowerment coordinators, shelter managers, and reintegration coordinators. Alongside the direct services, they also operate a 24/7 safe, confidential shelter, which provides accommodation and services to all victims of exploitation and their children.

D&E applies a three-phase reintegration model for the program beneficiaries.

- The first phase includes a 3 up to 6 months initial crisis intervention.
- The second phase includes the stabilisation and transition process which lasts from 7 to 12 months.
- The third phase is related to social inclusion and reintegration, a process which usually lasts from 3–36 months.

A key innovation at D&E is the establishment of a Social Cause Club, which is a common space for the empowerment of human trafficking and domestic violence survivors. A very important part of the reintegration process is mentoring - centred around the provision and encouragement of safe relationships, in which the survivors of trafficking can process their traumatic events. D&E have also set up a social enterprise to facilitate job training and income generations for beneficiaries, which also provides an additional source of funding for their activities. The provision of reintegration services for boys and men victims of human trafficking, and the afternoon childcare support through “Grandmother's House” for beneficiaries' children, are also their key innovations.

Beyond the aforementioned services, D&E also provides:

- Residential and community services.
- Legal assistance, psychological counselling, and medical assistance.
- Education and reinsertion into the school system.
- Identification of victims of human trafficking.
- Intermediation/facilitation with the family of origin.
- Support for housing such as subsidising the rent and support for long-term accommodation through including VoT in the social housing program.
- Information on available services in the community and respective contact information.
- Technical and financial support for income generation and self-employment.
- Evaluation of the formal labour market and increasing the access of victims.
- Activities to facilitate and increase access of victims of trafficking in public services.
- Enhancing cooperation with service providers and local government institutions.
- Lobbying activities, research, and studies for improving the legislation, and enhancing the rights of victims of trafficking in Albania.
- Training for NGOs and state institutions.
- Community awareness about the consequences of trafficking and the rights of victims of trafficking.
- Empowering youth at risk and the survivors to develop anti-trafficking awareness campaigns.



You can find more about Different & Equal here:



# Mary Ward Loreto Albania

The Mary Ward Loreto Foundation (MWL) is a nonprofit organisation aiming to eliminate human trafficking in Albania. The Foundation works to achieve this goal through a three-fold approach of advocacy, prevention and support for victims. MWL is operating mainly through the MWL Advice and Service Centre (ASC) approach, community development programmes, economic empowerment programmes.

The MWL Advice and Service Centre (ASC) approach is implemented in Tirana, Lezhë, Rrëshen, Saranda, Lushnja. These centres offer advice, counselling and services to all individuals vulnerable to human trafficking and/or social, legal, emotional and economic exploitation. Networked with the National Referral Mechanism and the Coalition of Shelters in Albania, the centres provide a wide array of in-house services, such as rescue, referral and other services for victims of trafficking and exploitation.

These centres provide the community with:

- Human development activities and awareness-raising sessions
- Health support and medical treatment
- Counselling, therapy, psychological support, and legal assistance
- Direct assistance for survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence
- Sheltering
- Emergency support during Covid-19 pandemic

MWL Foundation is running two social enterprises to economically empower women and girls, and to reduce vulnerability to human trafficking. The social enterprise model in Kallmet takes the form of a tailor shop, providing vocational and professional training to 5 part-time employed women. In Tropoja, 20 women market and sell their products in a store staffed by seasonally employed saleswomen.



MWL Foundation runs various programmes, and some of the main ones include:

Community development programme: MWL implements projects and activities in order to increase citizen engagement in their communities, targeting students, women and girls. Adolescents, aged 16 to 18, from the rural communities in the south and north of Albania are the most vulnerable to being trafficked across borders or internally. The activities aim to empower youngsters who can take an active role in changing their communities. This community engagement can cultivate a sense of hope and pride for youth living in their country.

The service-learning methodology: In these sessions, students, parents and teachers complete a questionnaire in order to highlight the community priorities. Consequently, students involved receive training in various aspects of the service-learning project cycle, including community mapping, planning, budgeting, and community action on how to raise awareness on human trafficking.

Economic empowerment programmes: The youth programme provides vocational training courses, internships, toolkits, job search, entrepreneurship training, career orientation, and follow up towards employment. This approach is being implemented under MWL's long term prevention strategy.



# National Association Education for Life - SHKEJ

The National Association Education for Life - SHKEJ is a nonprofit organisation which has been active for two decades. It started as a voluntary initiative of young people who wanted to help others. SHKEJ supports children, young people, and families with socio-economic difficulties, and have developed a culture of care and access to social services.

SHKEJ has 4 strategic goals:

- Protecting and educating children
- Socio-economic empowerment of the family
- Youth advocacy
- Community development.

Multidisciplinary services are provided in three ways:

1. Community Centres
2. Psycho-social mobile units
3. Partnerships with service providers at the local level.



SHKEJ operates the Eden and Little Angels Community Centres, both located in Tirana, by providing services on three levels:

- The individual level of intervention aims to: (i) support cases, meet basic needs and life skills activities; (ii) social-educational activities, and (iii) learning and educational support activities.
- The family level of intervention provides: (i) greater access to quality public services (protection, health, and education); (ii) parenting capacity building; (iii) developing a positive approach to creating a friendly environment for their family members.
- The community level of intervention: (i) networking and connections within the community to increase social interaction, (ii) capacity building to identify and address issues, and (iii) orientation towards social services and economic empowerment provided in the territory.



The service delivery is mainly focused on:

- Projects focused on child protection, coordinating with social protection structures at the local and national levels
- Youth empowerment programs, such as the “Ants Youth Group” in urban areas, and “Advocacy Youth Group” in rural areas aim to develop life skills in young people, community mobilisation, and active citizenship.
- Inclusive education in programs aimed at equal access for all children in the education system and increasing the capacity of pedagogical and psycho-social staff in schools in order to include children.
- Community prevention and empowerment programs in the fight against violence, exploitation and human trafficking.
- RE-IN-VEST program, socio-economic empowerment and improvement of the National Level Reintegration Mechanism for Return Migration and Albanian Asylum Seekers returned to their country of origin.
- Child-centred returns from war zones (CFS) and providing psycho-educational activities and economic empowerment of families, helping facilitate reintegration during return to the community.
- Mobile Operational Unit for Integrated Community Health Care, which provides direct psycho-social and health services to vulnerable communities in rural areas and serves to build the capacity of service providers.



Among the key innovations of SHKEJ is the establishment of a Digital Community Service Delivery Unit during the Covid-19 pandemic, providing technical support to adults and parents on how to use technology. Furthermore, SHKEJ held capacity building sessions for parents and children on the use of secure internet, with the aim to prevent cyber abuse and online trafficking. SHKEJ also set up two computer labs to support the education of children during the pandemic, and to raise awareness on the use of secure internet.





# Nisma per Ndryshim Shoqeror ARSIS

Nisma Arsis are involved in the proactive identification of service needs, and the subsequent provision of psychosocial services to juveniles in contact with the law. Additionally, they do direct field work and are part of the social services referral system.

Information on the immediate risk and the situation in which the child is taken into protection is assessed by the local Child Protection Unit within 24 hours.

Nisma Arsis also provide safe Emergency Accommodation through the multifunctional center "House of Colors", which provides temporary protection for children at high risk (street situations, victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, exploitation, parental care, unaccompanied minors, etc.).

Over the years, the Safe Emergency Accommodation Service has evolved from a very simple service to a holistic set of supportive provisions for children and their mothers at immediate risk, as a crucial part of the child protection mechanism. Children and vulnerable mothers are supported with food, hygiene, psychological counselling, healthcare, sports, and creative activities amongst other pursuits.

Nisma ARSIS provides safe emergency accommodation service for children, or mothers with children for between (on average) 3-11 days, or longer, until a solution can be provided from state authorities that guarantee the best interest of the child.

The Safe Emergency Shelter Service is the first and only service at the national level which fills the gap in high-risk child protection services. The service provides a professional trauma-informed approach for children at risk. This service served as a model for other municipalities and contributed to the drafting of the first emergency protection service standards.

It works closely with social services institutions, the police, and court structures, which make the decision to provide immediate protection and security. Over the last 12 years, the Safe Emergency Shelter Service counted more than 1200 cases of children assisted by the protection service throughout Albania, with an average number of 100-120 beneficiaries per year.

The provision of safe emergency housing service is provided in close cooperation with the social service structures in the Municipality, where the Child Protection determines the protection measures and the need for this type of service, for any child who is at high or immediate risk.

The Safe Emergency Shelter Service cooperates with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the State Social Services Unit, the Police and other relevant institutions, to protect vulnerable children and coordinate their responses.



You can find more about Nisma Arsis here:





# Tjeter Vizion

Tjeter Vizion (Another Vizion) is a non-governmental organisation that has been providing social care services in the prefecture of Elbasan, and surrounding regions, to minors, victims of trafficking and potential victims of trafficking from all over Albania.

Tjeter Vizion is a member of the Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters and the national referral mechanism as one of the main actors in the fight against human trafficking in Albania. It has run for over 20 years.

Tjeter Vizion provides the following services:

- A reintegration residential centre for minors.
- A centre for women and girls in difficulty, consisting of:
  - Day centre for women and girls.
  - A licensed VET centre, which provides tailoring, cooking, coffee machine repair, social care, and hair dressing courses for all target groups in need. All the courses are provided for free and assist beneficiaries who want to be reintegrated into the labour market. Also, coaching for employment through labor market orientation, on the job training and VET courses are provided.
- A laboratory for measuring water quality, air and land.



Tjeter Vizion has a deep knowledge of the social and economic problems of target groups in need and this is reflected in the drafting of social plans of Elbasan, the strategy of social inclusion of the municipality of Elbasan, guides and manuals for professionals in the field of social services, as well as in the reintegration process of groups in need.

The organisation has responded effectively in the fight against human trafficking, and has provided training for sector workers and practitioners.

Tjeter Vizion is also known for its monitoring of local government, aiming to ensure transparency and accountability. The organisation has drafted evaluation reports for the municipality of Elbasan, and for other municipalities in Albania.

Additionally, Tjeter Vizion is a member of the Local Public Safety Council in the municipality of Elbasan. This is a model of community mobilisation for public safety, which was piloted in Elbasan and has proved to be a successful model of community safeguarding.

The organisation aims to respect the human rights and freedoms provided in the Albanian Constitution, and in international conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by the Albanian state.

Tjeter Vizion also supports the overall economic development of the area, through tourism development and environmental protection projects.



# Vatra Psycho Social Centre

Vatra Psycho-Social Centre is an Albanian nonprofit organisation established in 1999. The mission of Vatra is to prevent human trafficking, sexual abuse and violence. The organisation provides protection, social and economic empowerment to victims through residential and community social services in Albania, information sharing, education, and advocacy.

The main focus areas of Vatra Centre's work include:

- Prevention of human trafficking, sexual abuse and violence (through awareness campaigns throughout Albania, support for women, girls, children, and young people in vulnerable situations).
- Identification of victims and potential victims of trafficking through the outreach work of Mobile Identification Units (Vlora, Durres, Berat, Dibra, Lezha).
- Rehabilitation and reintegration services for survivors of human trafficking, sexual abuse and violence through providing safe accommodation in 24/7 shelters and community services.
- Increased access to justice for victims through providing services to Vatra's Legal Clinic with specialised lawyers and psychologists.
- Provision of training for civil society workers, anti-trafficking practitioners and government employees.
- Lobby and advocacy through providing contribution and expertise for the drafting and improvement of Albanian legislation and policies.
- Studies and research.

Over the last 23 years, more than 35,000 members of the community and local authorities have participated in information and awareness raising activities, as well as capacity building activities. In 2001, Vatra established the first shelter in Albania for victims of human trafficking. Vatra continues to provide comprehensive long term reintegration services for survivors of human trafficking. Since the opening of the shelter, 2606 human trafficking survivors and their children have been assisted.





Vatra Centre has a staff of 32 professionals, which consists of social workers, psychologists, teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, economic empowerment staff, financial and administrative managers, program managers, and logistical staff.

15 volunteers are also engaged at Vatra, who contribute to the realisation of its activities and services.

In 2004, with the financial support of IREX (the International Research and Exchanges Board), Vatra Centre established the first Anti-Trafficking Network of Local Institutions - which was evaluated, and used as a model by the Albanian Government in 2006.

On the basis of this model, the Government established the anti-trafficking Regional Committees in 12 districts of Albania, consisting of local institutions and NGOs.

Moreover, Vatra Centre has been a member National Referral Mechanism for victims of human trafficking since 2005, and member of several national and international networks and Coalitions.



You can find more about Vatra Centre here:





# MEDAILLE TRUST PRESENCE IN ALBANIA

Since its inception on September 1st, 2023, Medaille Trust has aimed to address the complex challenges of human trafficking and exploitation in Albania with a comprehensive approach.

The key focus initiatives are:

Economic-Led Development (ELD) Programme: Medaille Trust's ELD programme aims to empower Albanian youth by bridging the skills gap between local education provision and global labour market demands. This initiative includes:

- Implementing targeted educational programs to enhance employability and entrepreneurship skills.
- Establishing business incubators to support local startups and provide essential mentorship and financial resources.
- Enhancing tourism infrastructure and promoting Albania as a sustainable economic hub and cultural destination.

Establishment of a Modern Slavery Act and Practical Programmes: Building on recent criminal justice conferences, Medaille Trust is actively involved in shaping Albania's legal framework against human trafficking. Key actions include:

- Collaborating with NGOs and legal experts to draft a comprehensive Anti-Trafficking Law.
- Advancement of the the "Victim's Voices": Achieving Best Evidence Project to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in local contexts.
- Advocating for the inclusion of anti-trafficking legislation in the Ministry of Internal Affairs' agenda for 2024- 2025, supported by the judiciary and parliamentary consultations.



Cross-Border Cooperation: Recognising the transnational nature of human trafficking, Medaille Trust emphasizes enhancing collaboration between Albania and the UK:

- Establishing a collaborative network with the Albanian Embassy in London and engaging the Albanian diaspora as angel investors for anti-trafficking projects.
- Conducting fact-finding missions and research with local universities and stakeholders to understand trafficking patterns and recidivism among returnees.
- Facilitating shared learning events, including conferences and joint training sessions, to promote knowledge exchange and collaborative solutions between law enforcement, NGOs, and community leaders.

Through these strategic initiatives, Medaille Trust is committed to making a significant impact in preventing human trafficking and modern-day slavery in Albania. By fostering economic development, strengthening legal frameworks, and enhancing cross-border cooperation, we aim to create a safer and more resilient society for vulnerable populations in Albania and beyond.



# Community of Pope John XXIII

Community of Pope John XXIII Association belongs to the International Network of “Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII”, from which receives technical and financial support for the management of facilities and projects. The Association has the objectives of promoting the social inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalised people (children at risk of dropping out to school, families in vulnerable conditions, people with physical and mental disabilities), and preventing the causes of social exclusion and poverty. The intervention is characterised by the choice of the association members to share their lives with people who are socially excluded in order to remove the causes that bring injustice. The main methodology of intervention consists in the setting up of family homes, where members choose to welcome people with different needs and emergencies.

The presence of Association Community of Pope John XXIII in Albania started in April 1999, when the Kosovars refugee emergency was attended to by the volunteers of “Operazione Colomba”. The Association in Albania is based primarily in the north - that is the area mostly inhabited by Catholics, but is also the poorest and the most underdeveloped area of the country. The north is also anchored to tradition, which can in practice mean the encouragement of social honour, revenge, little attention to gender equality and children's rights. The staff of the organisation face different kinds of social problems and meet hundreds of people and children in need, providing help and educational and leisure activities addressed to children in vulnerable conditions.

In the municipality of Shkodra, the women shelter "Santa Maria" supports the psychological and economic independence of women victim of domestic violence for their reintegration within society through individualised paths of protection, rehabilitation and work inclusion within local businesses.





In December 2023, they opened the new women shelter of the "Pope Giovanni XXIII Community" as a semi-autonomous structure. The main beneficiaries of the service are girls, women and mothers with children, victims of domestic violence but not only. The shelter also welcomes people in need. The need for the Community to open another structure for victims of domestic violence was clear - the result of numerous requests and the increasing domestic violence caseload. The service model aims to be as close as possible to family life, offering a protected, stimulating environment. That forces the groups to consider the uniqueness of each individual by valuing different tendencies and abilities, and considering the interests and skills of each survivor or beneficiary.



You can find more about the Community Pope John XXIII here:



# World Vision Albania

**'1,128 children and adolescents actively engaged in IMPACT Club groups.'**

To prevent children and adolescents from being affected by trafficking, World Vision Albania empowers them, preparing them for life's challenges and nurturing their potential as agents of transformation in their communities.



IMPACT+ is World Vision Albania's transformative adolescents' program that empowers adolescents as they transition into adulthood. In the last year they have undertaken anti-trafficking campaigns and informative sessions in close collaboration with local child protection services.

**'517 parents and legal caregivers participated in Positive Parenting groups.'**

World Vision's Celebrating Families model and Positive Parenting curriculum implemented in communities and vulnerable areas aim to empower parents and guardians to help prevent domestic violence and exploitation through the promotion of positive relationships in families and communities.

These trainings have notably impacted families with one parent, mainly mothers, and also families with adolescent children. Additionally, this model aims to empower women and girls to prevent their involvement in phenomena such as human trafficking. Some cases have been supported with group psychological services, specialised individual services, and referrals to relevant structures.

## **92 young artists participated in “Untold Stories 3 – An Art Perspective on Human Trafficking”.**

"Untold Stories 3 – An Art Perspective to Human Trafficking" is an initiative in the fight against human trafficking in Albania, supported by the UK Government and jointly implemented by World Vision Albania and UNICEF Albania. It was designed to foster resilience and raise awareness about human trafficking through art.

The project is engaging youth from Tirana, Shkodra, Kukës, and Diber, and aligning with the larger goal of the "Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania" program.

92 young artists participated and submitted 114 artworks in the framework of Untold Stories 3. Out of these, 30 pieces were selected by a professional jury for a grand exhibition held in Tirana on March 19, 2024.

### **The “Untold Stories 3” exhibition**

The exhibition, a culmination of the third edition of the "Untold Stories" series, served as a powerful awareness and education tool. It was attended by key figures, including representatives from the National Agency for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, the National Center for Victims of Trafficking, and the UK Embassy, among others. The event centred the voices of survivors, and three outstanding young artists were recognized for their contributions, further emphasising the role of art in social advocacy.



You can find more about World Vision Albania here:



# Acknowledgements

Arise would like to acknowledge, once again, the work of anti-trafficking organisations in Albania and thank them for taking the time to contribute on this sector briefing.

Any further requests for information can be sent to [anxhela@arise.foundation](mailto:anxhela@arise.foundation).