

From The Trustees

We would like to take the opportunity to thank you all again for journeying with A2B so faithfully. Coronavirus has made the start of 2020 an unprecedented year, A2B have redirected all our efforts into feeding people who can no longer work. This has more than doubled the number of people we feed weekly, and brought new opportunity to love the hurting, lifting dignity and restoring hope.

We ask for your prayers for protection, health, wisdom and continued means to support.

Andrew, David, Nicola, Paul, Sam and Tracy (Trustees, A2B UK)

Coronavirus Appeal: Feed a family Paul Heffer, A2B Trustee

At the time of writing 27 people have died from Covid-19 in Albania, far lower than other European countries, but the economic knock on effects have been huge.

The informal economy in Albania is estimated at around 30% of GDP (EuroEconomica Issue 3(37)/2018) and many people scrape by being paid cash in hand for each day's work. Following the state of emergency and national curfew on 10th March, most Albanians are unable to work, which has pushed people who live hand to mouth under the poverty line. Without a means to earn a wage, this community are now reliant on others to provide food and basic supplies.

The Local government in Elbasan reached out to us for help. Thanks to our years of serving the community, A2B are known as an efficient and effective organisation that have a passion for the vulnerable in our communities. Following the closure of our Kindergartens and Day Centre projects we mobilised our 21 strong team to purchase, pack and deliver food to those in need. We are now supporting an additional 350 people on top of the 250 people we regularly provide for. This has doubled our food budget and we are asking for your support to provide for those who don't have any reserves.

See a [video produced by the local government showing A2B working together](#):



We know the financial result of lockdown in the UK has been tough for many of us, but if you are able, please **consider giving £25** (or as much or little as you can) which will provide a family of 4 with the bare essentials to get through.

Please visit our [Website](#) for bank transfer information or the [Virgin Giving Page](#) stating "Covid-19 fund".

In the event we are unable to spend all money raised during this appeal on food, after the emergency we will redirect this to support vulnerable people as part of our other projects.

A2B Albanian Earthquake Response Graham Brooks

On the 26th November 2019, north-western Albania was struck by a 6.4-magnitude earthquake. Since the earthquake there have been numerous smaller earthquakes and aftershocks. They have affected an area generally north of Tirana reaching as far as Durres on the west coast. The area shows significant damage to many buildings and in addition a number of buildings have totally collapsed killing the occupants. Many of the buildings that are still standing are no longer habitable and have been condemned by the authorities.



Teams were sent in from various European countries to assist the Albanian government in assessing the safety of buildings. Many buildings are now empty with signs on them prohibiting entry. It has been stated that up to 20,000 people have been left homeless. The government has pledged to rebuild people's homes.

For the time being homeless people have been assisted in finding temporary accommodation with family, friends or rented accommodation. In many cases this has often required families to move away from their home towns or villages. The Albanian government has estimated the cost of rebuilding in excess of €1billion.

Soon after the earthquake, (A2B Managers) Keta and Elona visited the area to assess how A2B could respond. They made contact with Pastor Ermir Taja of The Good Seed Church in Vore. Since then, A2B, together with five other local churches, have been helping them as they have become a local focal point for assistance and practical support for earthquake victims that have remained in the town. Pastor Ermir Taja has been receiving food and hygiene products and other items such as mattresses and clothes for distribution to mainly Muslim residents of the town. Pastor Ermir has been opening the church three times a week to distribute aid parcels. This has also given him the opportunity to share the gospel, pray with people and hold short church services. This has been well received by the community.

We went into the town to view buildings that now stand empty and in silence. All evidence of life gone.

It is not known how long rebuilding will take or if it will ever be completed. Many people still live in fear of further earthquakes and with uncertainty over their long-term accommodation. They are living in a state of limbo, with little planning to resolve the situation.. For a number of Vore residents, The Good Seed Church is one of the few organisations offering loving care and support for their daily physical and spiritual needs.

To date, A2B has collected some £12,500 worth of provisions which are being distributed to those in need - food, clothes, hygiene products, cooking pans, cups, plates, blankets etc. Many people were left only with the clothes they stood in. They now have to start rebuilding their lives with the minimum of state assistance.



A Church Altar stands strong in Durres quoting Jer 31:3 - "I have loved you with an everlasting love"

Hardworking Hands Sam Whitmarsh, A2B chair

A 3 hour drive from Elbasan – high in the mountains, A2B heard of a family that could use our help. A2B have previously travelled here to deliver Samaritan's Purse - Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes. The headteacher of a nearby school told us of 7 people from 3 generations living in 2 rooms in very poor conditions – made worse and more dangerous by earthquake damage. The father fights every day to make ends meet. He gets up early to collect medicinal herbs in the mountains to sell. After carrying heavy bundles back to his house, he walks his children the two hours to school and back and is then ready to start his day's work. He is a farmer, feeding himself and family from his land and working as a labourer for others he can walk to.



His hands show a life spent in the earth, working tirelessly - they are calloused and hard – but they contrast powerfully with his heart. He works every day to support his parents, his wife and to make sure his children receive an education.

A2B want to support this family through the Family Link program, we would like to gift some basic food supplies. Elona (A2B Director) said “We feel very sad when we see people as poor as this family, their only request to us is that we bring them a sack of flour, so they can bake bread”. We also want to advocate for



him and lobby the government to make sure he receives the state support he is entitled to. There is a government scheme that will repair broken buildings following the earthquake but often those who are poorly educated, living away from the urban areas, are missed.

A2B won't neglect people like this. We see this father's hands, we see his heart and we will help.

If you would like to sponsor (or part sponsor) £15 - £50 per family a month please contact:

tracy.bishop@a2balbania.org

Family Link Stories Tracy Bishop, A2B family link coordinator

The Sina family have been receiving support from A2B for six years. After Shpetime's husband died she was unable to support her two children and her mother and her brother-in-law. A2B provided monthly food parcels and emotional support and advocated for her to receive government support to pay for the rent of two rooms.

Shpetime now works in the recycling industry in her village. Her children have grown so they can attend school without the need of their mother accompanying them.

We celebrated with Shpetime as she was able to leaving the Family Link Program and support herself and her family sustainably.



After Winter comes the Spring

Sam Whitmarsh, A2B Chair

Covid-19 lockdowns are affecting children all over the world as schools close and daily routines change.

[Have a look at this video](#) which was taken just before the closure of the H4F kindergarten. Some of the children have learning difficulties, but working with educational experts from Passi and Beyond in Malta, our teachers are able to design programs that include all levels of ability and teach at a rate suitable for them. This game helps develop fine motor skills, the names of colours, counting and relative sizes.

Children with learning difficulties are often overlooked in Albania, but students are surprising parents and teachers with the progress they can make. One parent said "Now the children are at home because of the lock down we can really see the difference the centre has made to them. We only sent [our children] because of the food you give them – good food, now we see how much they have developed. We never thought it possible to teach them because of their problems, but you have given them joy, education and new skills - they are teaching us!"

Many of the children have written notes and painted pictures saying how much they want to come back to the kindergartens to see their "school mothers". For other students the desire to be back at school is related to poor conditions and sometimes abuse at home.

Please pray for these children, for protection and peace during the lock down. This hope and looking forward to the end of the lock down is like looking forward to spring after winter. The spring will come, and we will be together again.



4 ways to support A2B by shopping!

David Ayrtton, A2B Treasurer

If you like the idea of giving money to A2B with no cost to you, simply by carrying out your normal shop, please read on! We have 4 ways you can help lift dignity and restore hope by shopping instore and online.

1. Every time you shop online via Give as you Live at 4,000+ top retailers, including eBay, John Lewis and Expedia, a FREE donation will be made to us and it won't cost you a penny extra! Sign up at giveasyoulive.com.
2. Amazon have recently set up their own charitable support page and so no longer use Give As You Live. When you buy from Amazon just go first to smile.amazon.co.uk 0.5% of what you spend will go to A2B.
3. Load up a Give As You Live supermarket store card and use it at the checkout whenever you shop. Get your card from instore.giveasyoulive.com
4. Treat your friends, family and loved ones to the perfect donation-raising gift card - valid to spend at over 120 high street retailers including John Lewis, H&M, Argos and Halfords. Suitable for all ages and interests, it's perfect for every occasion, and you'll even raise free funds for us every time you buy a card! Get your card from instore.giveasyoulive.com/giftcard



A2B Lifting Dignity,
Restoring Hope

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A2B is a registered charity in the UK (1168468) and a registered Foundation in Albania