



Spring Newsletter 2022

"For God so loved the world, that he sent his only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life" John 3 v 16

From The Trustees,

It's a pleasure to share stories in these newsletters —real examples of the impact your donations are having in Albania. Alketa's article about Goni below is amazing, his life has truly been turned around. This would not have been possible without you, our supporters funding the House of Opportunity Project. A2B is under financial pressure at the moment, with many projects facing a significant funding gap so this edition also contains appeal for finance so that A2B can keep helping people like Goni.

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

Eye to Eye Alketa Hassani, A2B Director

At four years old, Goni was abandoned by his mother at an orphanage in Tirana. Up to that point they had begged together and Goni has fond memories of her and the life they led. In the orphanage, Goni found it difficult to obey the rules, and he was frequently moved between two institutions as punishment. As soon as he was old enough, Goni stole other children's toys or valuables and sold them on the streets. He often ran away and lived as a beggar - memories of his old life with his mother.

When Goni was old enough, he left the orphanage. He lived for four years on the streets of Tirana, begging. He says he didn't talk to anyone or look at people's faces for all this time. He could decide whether they would give money by looking at their shoes. Nights were dangerous, he lived under a bridge and was attacked by drug addicts who stole his days earnings. In the winter it was cold, without anywhere to stay, Goni fell into the influence of the drug gangs and distributed narcotics in return for a warm place to sleep.



Goni was referred to the A2B House of Opportunity (HOP) Project first by French missionaries in 2018 but fearing institutions, he refused describing it as "a much worse life" than the one he was living. In 2020, Goni became seriously ill with a lung infection and severe scabies. By Autumn 2020 Goni had come to the end of himself. The French couple offered to treat him in hospital and invited him again to try HOP saying it was not an institution but a family. Goni accepted. The hunger, abandonment and fear had become too much.

He was totally surprised by HOP, he found the house to be a small, unlike the orphanages. There were no dormitories, but private bedroom space just for him. There were *no* "workers" who would force him to do things. He was expected to help the HOP family, caring for each other and cleaning! He found a family.

Goni still found the adjustment difficult, often shouting and falsely accusing others. He would not look anyone in the eye when talking and would often feel anxious in the home. It took a long time, and a lot of patience, but he gradually accepted that his old life gave no prospects for his future. Eventually he was able to ask "Please help me". The HOP were able to find him a job as a labourer in a furniture company. He worked for two months, but left when his mother made contact and coerced him to beg in Tirana. Goni returned to HOP and in November 2021 made the decision to choose his own life and stop following his mum and to stop begging.

Goni said to his faithful French friends "My life started again when the door of the HOP house opened for me. I will always be grateful to this family who gave me new values and new meaning for my life, I can now look people in the eye when I speak". We continue to pray and encourage Goni as he remains in the care of A2B and give thanks that God has given one of His children a second chance.

Returning to the place I love

Graham Brooks

As I sat on the plane to Tirana at the end of March, I was wondering what new things my trip would reveal. At passport control. The border official smiled and said hello - that was new. After checking my details he said 'you have been coming to Albania for ten years'. I think it is nearer 15 years, but it got me thinking about how much had changed for some Albanians and how little for others. The roads are better, new buildings, cars are newer and familiar. For some, life is more secure, or as secure as endemic corruption allows. Behind this facade, many still struggle day by day to get by without help. Prices of fuel, energy and basic essentials have risen enormously as they have worldwide. Many in the Roma and Gypsy communities as well as rural families are trapped in a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break.

A2B supports the health and education of children, many of whom live in dire circumstances. Their opportunities would be severely limited without A2B and its supporters. They would be destined to a life of scavenging and hard labour without any security. One example is the family of Aida. She is a cleaner at one of our day centres. Her cleaning income is the only money her family has to live on. Her husband has been working away from home in North Macedonia packing apples to send to Russia. He lost his job due to the Ukraine conflict. The family of 5 all live and sleep in one room without



running water or their own electricity supply.

The three daughters are supported by A2B. Two attend one of our kindergartens and the older daughter is in year 4 at school and attends our afterschool club. All three children have lunch at the day centre. The girls are vulnerable and the parents have no immediate prospects of meaningful work. The Albanian state does not support the family financially. This scenario is very common and encountered time after time.



A2B continues to support children through school with kindergarten, nutrition, homework support and pastoral care. Education is so important in breaking the cycle of poverty. I am pleased to share that funds given to A2B continue to make life changing differences to 130 or so vulnerable children from poor families across our three kindergartens and two day centres.



During my visit I also met Fabian. His family of three were supported by Family Link since he was 6 years old. He is now 19 and is about to complete his studies in computer programming at university. His mother would have struggled to bring up Fabian and his sister without the consistent support of A2B over a number of years. He and his sister now receive a monthly educational grant to enable them to undertake their studies. He has grown into a faithful believer who plays a part in the church community.



The House of Opportunity continues to offer a secure home and mentoring to young people who lack the home stability to study or work. It enables them to get a positive start in working life

rather than being drawn into a life of crime and dysfunction. Sokoli, one of the recent residents has completed his training and now works as a chef in Malta.



Your continued financial support is needed and appreciated at this time. A2B really does provide life changing help that isn't readily available from any other source and it is often the only point of optimism in the lives of many poor families.

The Situation in Albania

Alketa Hassani and Elona Deliu A2B Directors

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing. Psalm 68:5-6a

God's heart for the poor and destitute rings loud in scripture and this is the reason for everything we do at A2B. Following the economic challenges following Covid-19, poverty in has taken a firm grip on Albania. After years of economic improvement, there is now greater unemployment than we have ever known. People that couldn't work during Covid-19 took out loans that they are struggling to repay. Prices are increasing but the minimum wage is constant at €140 pcm. For example, the price of bread has doubled now €1 but was €0.5 two years ago. If people with jobs are struggling to survive the poor aren't able to cope with Government assistance at €30 pcm. For many the A2B support at our day centre food programs may be the only food that they eat that day.

People are increasingly desperate, we are watching poverty taking students and single mums into prostitution, especially through the "massage business". Families looking for extra income are trying to produce hash on secluded land up in the mountains, or turning their homes into hash labs, which is feeds the criminal community. The young generation are being shown the wrong way to get money which is incredibly sad. Even for those who resist criminal activities, mounting financial pressure is increasing the rate of divorce amongst the poorest which furthers poverty.

So as the need increases we are trusting in God for full provision but A2B finances are becoming stretched. The 'Another Life' projects in Elbasan and Peqin are not fully funded and we are operating these projects by faith. Our Second day centre only has funding until December. This means that that A2B may soon need to make some difficult decisions. We do remember all that God has done and that He has been faithful in wonderful answers to prayer that we have seen. Sometimes it feels that we are starting all over again with the need as great as ever but we remember that God's heart is for the poor, for those that have nothing and so we want to partner with Him to see the practical ways that we can serve in these seemingly impossible times.

We would ask you to pray:

- For hope where there looks to be hopelessness.
- For provision where the world sees lack
- For vision as we seek heaven's solution in our situation
- For us to look with the eyes of Jesus to everyone that steps into our projects

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. Jeremiah 29:7

So our prayer is for Elbasan and the many poor towns around the district, that we will continue to see peace and prosperity, that we will continue to have the passion and love for this beautiful city and Country that Jesus loves. We pray everyone will prosper and turn their hearts and eyes upon Him!

We thank you for your continued support! We are so grateful you are such a loyal partner in every one of our battles!



A2B Earthquake Appeal

David Ayrton A2B Treasurer

In late 2019 we set up an appeal to help victims of the earthquake in Albania. It achieved its aim of helping many individuals and families in need. In most cases immediate, short-term help was required, but in some cases whole houses had been destroyed and new ones needed building. Permission to do that takes a long time in Albania with many



bureaucratic hurdles to overcome. Some applications have been successful but not all. A2B kept aside £6235 for this purpose, but after trying for 2 years it seems that it is not going to be possible to use this money as planned and it needs to be re-purposed. Accordingly, the Trustees have agreed that the remainder of the earthquake fund will be transferred to Another Life Project Peqin, where it is greatly needed. This project helps children in a very poor part of the town avoid begging, to start learning and gives them the best chance when they start state education. Thank you to all who generously gave to this appeal.



An Urgent Appeal in 2022

David Ayrton, A2B Treasurer

We are all experiencing financial pressures greater than many of us have faced before. The media is full of headlines telling us that we should expect changes that will increase our cost of living. How is A2B managing to navigate these stormy waters?

A2B is finding things difficult too. In the UK our focus is on two main funds:

- Family Link: Sponsoring families to help them with food, education, health, housing and other necessities. Thank you to the Family Link supporters who have remained committed through the pandemic. The need is always greater than the resource and Keta and Elona have the difficult task of deciding which families they can take on to the project and which will have to wait.
- General Fund: Used to pay our staff salaries across all projects, running costs of vehicles, office costs like broadband, mobile phones, computers etc., and lots of other general expenses.

To aid financial planning for A2B in Albania we set a monthly amount to be sent to the General Fund regardless of what we receive (currently £4000 per month). At certain times (like around Christmas) we have received more than we need and keep this in reserve to smooth out months when the amount received is insufficient. For most of the months of 2021 our income for the General Fund has been below what we needed to maintain our commitment. We have regularly withdrawn money from our reserve fund and we have reached the point where we can no longer do that. Despite inflationary pressures, we cannot increase support in the coming financial year and we may even have to reduce the monthly transfer amount. This is particularly difficult because staff salaries are at risk.

So we are making a two-fold appeal to all our supporters, and hopefully to new ones as well! Please can you ask God if he wants you to support this work further by either increasing your monthly gift or making a one-off gift that we can use to boost our reserve fund? At the same time can you see if there are ways you can share what God is doing through A2B with your church, your friends, your family?

The apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9: Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn't give with hesitation or because of pressure. God loves a cheerful giver. God has the power to provide you with more than enough of every kind of grace. That way, you will have everything you need always and in everything to provide more than enough for every kind of good work.



A2B



Appeal 2022

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Lifting Dignity,
Restoring Hope

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