

From The Trustees

Summer 2021 may be drawing to a close—but we would like to brighten your autumn by sharing some of the things that have happened over the past few months at A2B in this summer edition of the A2B newsletter. The Trustees continue to be very grateful for your generosity in supporting the work in Albania—particularly through covid you have been very faithful. On behalf of all the A2B staff and particularly our clients, we want to say a huge thankyou for your giving and your prayers.

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

Not Just a Beggar Andrew Davies, A2B Trustee



One of the projects run by A2B is called The House of Opportunity (HOP). HOP is a house in central Elbasan that A2B were given by the local Municipality. However, it was in a very poor condition and so a great deal of time and funds have been put into this project to bring it up to a usable standard. The purpose of HOP was to provide a secure and welcoming "home" for 16-17 year olds. Although still children, the Albanian State provide little to no care for 16-17 year olds and as they don't qualify as adults and lack the training and life experience to look after themselves independently. A2B focuses, understandably, on younger children and older/senior adults but the Team in Albania felt it important that something should be done for these young adults. HOP currently accommodates up to 5 young people at any one time as well as the house parents. This is a small project but it really impacts lonely and desperate young adults' lives. Such individuals often choose the wrong path which leads to crime or prostitution and puts them at risk of trafficking.

At a recent trustee meeting Keta and Elona joined us by Zoom and shared a story of a 16 year old boy who had been begging on the streets, the picture they took after chatting together is shown above. To most people he was "just a beggar", someone who didn't try hard enough to get a proper job and was a drain on society. But through God's love and His guidance, seeing what Jesus sees in people – inside of them not just what is on the surface – this boy is not "just a beggar", he has worth, he is loved by God. This boy just needed someone to show care and interest in him and that there can be a different path. Keta and Elona could see this and were able to convey this so well. Off camera His Spirit brought me to tears. My Heart was broken! Are we all not "just unworthy beggars" but to God we are more. We are Children of God and loved by Him. If we want to be like Jesus we need to think and act like Him. See beyond "the beggar" and into his heart.

The photo on the right shows the same boy, now becoming a man, celebrating with others from the HOP project, his first wage packet working as a labourer. It's amazing to see this transformation. For me, the joy of working with A2B is that my heart is broken by God time and again.



Origins

Paul Heffer, A2B Trustee



People often ask me how A2B was started so I thought I would write a short article to tell you how it happened. Some of you will remember when the Kosovan war broke out in 1999. The politics of the former Yugoslav states is complex, but ethically motivated atrocities caused a major migration of over a million refugees many of whom came across the border into Albania.

One of the many routes was along the main railway line that passed through the town of Elbasan. At that time two Christians called Roy and Christine had moved to the town to help run an orphanage. They found themselves caught up in this mass migration and ended feeding over a thousand refugees in a small building in the town (later to become the first A2B day centre). Roy and Chris came from the town of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk and had links with many churches. An urgent call came from them asking for help, especially with food and clothing. Most of the refugees in the town had nothing but the clothes they had on when they left Kosovo.

A small group set up a charity to raise money to send out to Kosovo. One of those was my wife Jill and she was able to tell me what was happening and how we could help. As a Christian musician and concert organiser I had many friends in the Christian music scene and organised a fund raising concert at the Bury St Edmunds Cathedral. This raised the profile of the charity and raised several hundred pounds. That concert is available on Youtube just search for "A Concert For Kosovo" or my channel "musicbod"



Thankfully within a few months the U.N. intervened and the conflict finished. The refugees were able to return to Kosovo. One of the men who had been helped called Jakup (centre top picture) contacted Chris and Roy and told them that many families had lost their menfolk and the women and children were struggling to feed themselves. Roy and Chris made a visit there and managed to find a building to establish a "Soup Kitchen". This was managed by Jakup and continued for some months. During a visit

we met with the U.N. at their headquarters in Pristina. They told us that they liked what we were doing and offered to purchase some of the supplies. They continued to do that and eventually took over the running of the whole project.

Roy and Chris returned to Elbasan and shared the huge need in Albania for help. We decided to keep this new charity running and the first project provided food and housing for people living in adverse poverty. Aid To The Balkans (A2B) was born! A2B has continued its valuable work in Elbasan and surrounding areas and today we have expanded to three sites. We sponsor families, run kindergarten schools and provide health and social care services to people still in need.

It is true to say that without God's supernatural help and guidance, plus the prayers and generosity of our supporters, 20 years ago until today, none of this would have been possible. It's amazing what we can achieve together, thank you for all your support.



A2B Accounts year ended 31st March 2021

David Ayrton A2B Treasurer

We want to keep you informed of how your money is spent by A2B so here is a brief summary of our accounts for the financial year ending March 31st 2021. We are very grateful for the help provided in producing these accounts by Derek Gadd, our independent examiner.

Total money received	£73,249
This was made up of:	
Donations and gifts	£66,272
Refund of Income Tax (Gift Aid)	£6,971
Bank Interest	£6

Note: Within Donations and Gifts was £62 from 'Give as You Live' and £8.85 from 'Amazon Smile'. This is money raised through purchases on the internet at no cost to the purchaser, and we would encourage everyone to consider using these schemes.

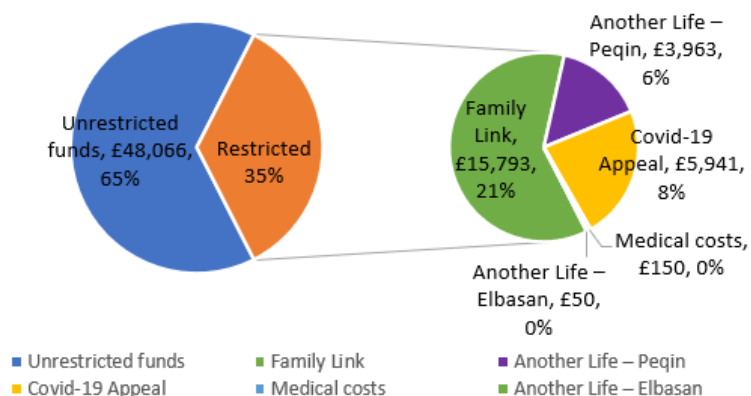
Money received - £73,249



We then spent £74,571 comprised of: £74,267 as Grants to A2B (Albania) and £304 as Bank charges in the UK. Approximately 65% of the funds spent were unrestricted, and A2B Albania decided how they should be spent. They were used to help with general costs, e.g., salaries, vehicle running costs, office and admin costs, phones, internet, staff training, travel. 35% of the funds were restricted, in other words given for specific purposes. The main purposes were:

Family Link	£15,793
Another Life – Peqin	£3,963
Covid-19 Appeal	£5,941
Medical costs	£150
Another Life – Elbasan	£50

Money Spent - £74,571

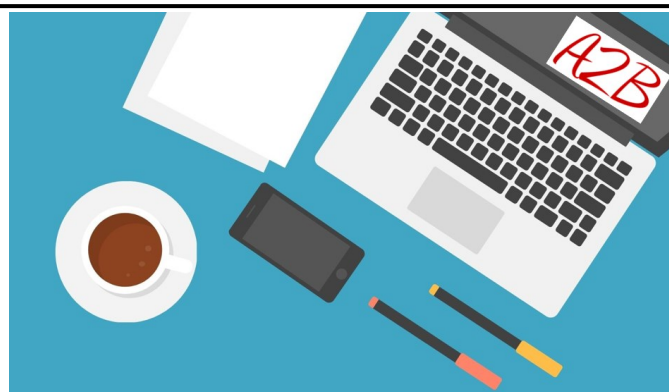


We are very grateful as Trustees that you, our supporters, have maintained your donations throughout this difficult period, and responded so generously when extra appeals have been made for specific purposes. This has enabled A2B to carry on throughout the pandemic without having to cut our services to our clients in need. But of course, inflation adds to the costs every year and we would encourage all our donors to review their donations regularly to take account of that.

Zoom Prayer!

Join us to pray together on Zoom for A2B and Albania on **Friday 24th of September 2021 7.30 –8.30 pm**

We will join together with the A2B Albania directors: Keta and Elona and partner churches from all over the UK and Albania. Keep an eye out for further meeting details that will be shared in separate emails.



Summer Camps 2021

Sam Whitmarsh, A2B Chair

After a covid hit year in 2020 where social distancing led to reduced numbers of children at summer camp, 2021 was a return to the fun and enjoyment of previous years. Over 75 children attended the summer camp at two separate locations. The camp ran for four weeks and was supported by volunteers from the 'Jesus brought us together church' and an amazing group from Poland. Two of the Albanian volunteers had previously been part of the A2B family link program as sponsored children. Growing up with a connection to A2B and benefiting from this love and support, they wanted to give back and help others as part of the A2B team. It's amazing to think that A2B is able to have this generational impact. The program was organised around five stations where the children had lots of fun learning bible stories, the cultural history of Albania, danced and played different games. The final week was led by the team from Poland, many of whom were children themselves. They shared the gospel story and their own experiences of God working in their lives. This child-child testimony was powerful and shared in ways that the children could all understand. In all, this years camp was one of the best in recent memory for the children, staff and volunteers.



Family Link update

Tracy Bishop, A2B Trustee

Flutura joined the family link project after leaving a local village after she divorced her husband. He was sent to prison for 25 years after returning home from a drinking session and killing his mother, brother and sister in law. It was by chance that Flutura was not home with her children at the time. Unable to stay in the village, and with little money to afford rent or food, Flutura was found by A2B picking up plastic bottles late at night with her daughters— one dressed as a boy to try and protect the three of them, to make a little extra money. A2B were able to support the emergency needs of the family with some money for rent and food parcels. This allowed the daughters to return to school and Flutura to pick up casual work cleaning.

This difficult time was 5 years ago but thanks to A2B and your support, Flutura has been able to complete a tailoring course, in partnership with A2B which provides her with more stable work. Mikaela is now at university studying law—next semester she will study in Lithuania with a scholarship. Fjorda has completed her high school exams and is planning to become a policewoman! Both daughters are working part time and the whole family can now safely and sustainably provide for their needs, and no longer require support. It's a great story of how lives can be turned around, lifting dignity and restoring hope!



Lifting Dignity,
Restoring Hope

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