



20 VJET

**A 20 YEARS JOURNEY IN
FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE**



**2003
2023**

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Alo! Mik

is an Albanian NGO inspired by Christian faith to serve vulnerable children and families.

Our vision

is to see children flourishing and being agents of change in their community.

Our mission

is to offer life changing care to children, bringing people together on a journey from brokenness to wholeness.

Alo ! Mik has been operating in Albania since 2003, running different projects to ensure holistic wellbeing of children, especially for the more vulnerable.

A word from our founder

Who would have thought, back in 1999, that a simple 'visit' to Albania could turn into such an exciting journey? Who would have thought that a simple offer of help, motivated by the urgency of a humanitarian crisis, could turn into a long-term strategy to help thousands of children? But really, who could resist a child's plea, or an outstretched hand, or the anxiety of a child who has realized that without education, his or her future is in danger? Who can remain silent, indifferent to the suffering of an abandoned child?

Since the registration of Alo! Mik in 2003, step by step and year after year, the initial emotion has been replaced by the implementation of a comprehensive strategy to meet the needs of children in Albania. Today, children benefit from a wide range of services, from daily meals to specialized therapy for childhood trauma.

Our programs are important tools for making an impact and transforming lives. However, the key lies in our ability to offer each child a side by side journey, a hand-in-hand walk - especially through life's storms and brokenness. It is for this reason that we wish to offer these children the gift of a presence by their side, in the knowledge that each journey with these children is both wonderfully unique and unpredictable.

Yes, we believe that the very beginning of love is letting those we love simply be themselves, and not trying to shape them according to our agendas or understanding. Otherwise, we'd just be looking for our own reflection in the other person. But where there is space and time to offer a path of unconditional love, life can flourish - even in the midst of the deepest wounds and brokenness. Our teams, the Eden Park camp site, the Oasis community center and our new emergency reception center are such spaces of love and care.

I can't fail to mention that these 20 years of journey are also an expression of deep gratitude for the contribution of each and every one of you: collaborators, volunteers, project partners, trainers, donors, public institutions and those who have fought in prayer. What a joy and privilege it is to journey together to see lives transformed from brokenness to wholeness, especially for the most vulnerable!

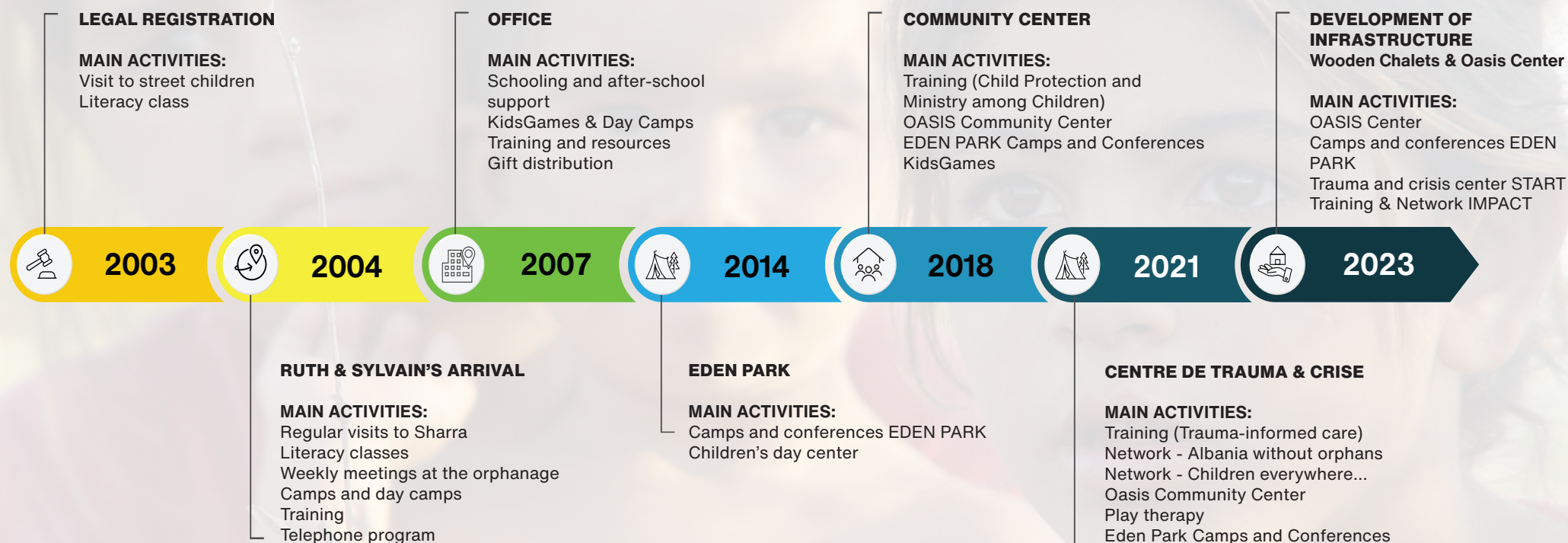
Our humble contribution to 20 years of journeying for the good of children in Albania is also a call to Faith, Hope and Love according to Jesus Christ. A journey in itself, following in the footsteps of an Albanian heroine and bearer of the Christian faith, known as Mother Teresa. Indeed, our sense of cooperation and collegiality reflects a deep spiritual call from our Creator: to give Birth to Life - even in the darkest of places.

"I have come that they may have life, life to the full." John 10.10

Sylvain Vergnon



OUR JOURNEY OVER THE YEARS





Vulnerable Children & Families

Despite enormous development progress over the past 2 decades, many families are still living in precarious situations and are struggling to ensure a minimum wellbeing. Good progresses have been done in creating a functional social protection system, however social care services are still limited and depending on NGOs.

Child Protection

All forms of abuse towards children are unacceptable. It is our duty to keep children safe, to promote their wellbeing and protect them from abuse and harm.

Faith Development

Attention to faith development must go hand in hand with all other aspects of development (Dan Brewster). When spirituality is given the attention it deserves, research shows that we can have a positive contribution to children's lives and development.



Trauma & Crisis

Trauma in childhood is not uncommon and affects everything: a person's ability to learn, manage emotions and behavior, health, relationships, etc.... We therefore build interventions to prevent and respond to the problem of complex relational trauma in children, offering specialized care and services and mobilizing and equipping workers among children and professionals.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is an issue that affects all spheres of the society. It is not just about physical violence but more widely about the control of a victim by an intimate partner. In Albania, statistics show that at least half of all women have experienced one or more types of domestic violence. To end it and support victims, the whole community needs to stand up and to work together.



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

with Samaritan's Purse



354'720 gifts

Distribution of Christmas gifts as a tangible demonstration of God's love to children in need throughout Albania, in partnership with the local church.

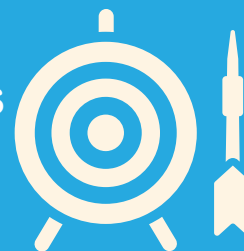
THEATER



18'858 children

One-hour interactive shows featuring drama, dance, song, games and puppets.

KIDSGAMES



4'119 children
46 villages

Olympic Games day camps for children aged 6 to 14, in collaboration with local churches.



CAMPS A EDEN PARK

8'982 children
& youth

Residential camps for children and youth focused on hopeful experiences that support the educational, social and spiritual development of campers.

OUR IMPACT



CARE FOR FAMILIES IN NEED

55 children

supported to become agents of change

217 families

supported in times of crisis

65 families accompanied over the long term & with integrated services

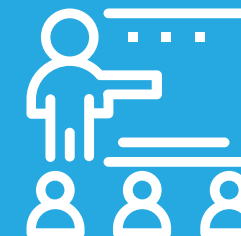
Practical, psychosocial and spiritual support, as well as integrated services for children and families.



TRAININGS

2'427 people

Training courses on various themes: child protection, day camps and residential camps, children's ministry in the Church, trauma-informed care, etc. for those working with children.





THEIR JOURNEY THROUGH THE YEARS

Mariela

My name is Mariela, 27, from Tirana. My family is made up of my husband, my mother, my brother and my niece. I have completed my studies as an administrative assistant. I love music, sport and travelling. My greatest desire is to be close to and care for people with broken hearts. To do what others have done for me.

My childhood was both beautiful and very difficult. When I was a child, my mother took care of me from a distance: I could rarely spend a whole day with her, because I grew up in a residential center. Most of the time, I was surrounded by lots of people, but in reality I felt alone and with dozens of questions about my life. Who am I? What future would I have? Will I ever make it in life? Will I have a job or a family? ... There were deep roots of despair in my heart. I was too scared to face reality.

What frightened me most was the lack of a relationship with my mother and her health problems. Even after I returned to her forever (at the age of 18), the challenges in my life were countless, in addition to her health problems. For me, it was like hitting rock bottom on every level of my life.

I'm grateful to God that, during this difficult journey, He brought into my life people who helped me to find myself and hope for the future. Along the way, God brought Alo! Mik into my life (Sylvain and Ruth). My first contact with them was at the age of 7. At the age of 11, I formed an even closer relationship with Ruth and Sylvain, through the activities I took part in at summer camp, with the children's and youth group, and through volunteering at summer camp.

Alo! Mik was a great support, especially in the most difficult period of my life, when I needed to be financially independent and help my family. I asked Sylvain and Ruth for help with a job opportunity, and their positive response changed the course of my life and ignited a spark of hope within me.

For 7 years I was employed by Alo! Mik. There, I had the opportunity to evolve professionally, to train and to go beyond my limits in different positions. I had the opportunity to take a professional training course as a children's entertainer. This taught me how children should be treated in difficult contexts. There, I gained valuable experience not only of the work itself, but also of the values of this organization.

For two years now, I've been working with another organization that works with children in need, offering them various services and sharing with them the good news of the Gospel. My professional and personal journey with Alo! Mik, helps me in my work and ministry with children.

Alo! Mik has been an open door for me, an opportunity to build, grow and get to know myself. Today, I have joy, and what motivates me is having hope for tomorrow. Above all, my source of joy is the comfort of Jesus Christ.

Greisi

My name is Greisi, I'm 16 years old. I love sport, especially volleyball. I live with my family: my mother, my father, my two sisters and my two brothers. My greatest joy in life is my family. This year, I'm starting high school. Alo! Mik has been a huge blessing for me and my family. Without them, neither I nor my family would be where we are today. Until the age of 7, my family and I lived in Sharra. The situation there was disastrous. People lived in shacks where everything that fell outside came inside. We had no water to wash in, no food to eat and no clothes to wear. Mom and Dad worked at the Sharra dump, selling garbage to feed us. Dozens of other families lived like us. Our days were filled with garbage, misery and despair. Where we lived, cans were collected on one side of the street and sold on the other. It was a daily routine. As children, we played in the street, among the garbage cans and shacks. Our little joys were when our parents found a toy in the garbage can and brought it to us to play with. My life and that of my family took a different course when I was 7. Alo! Mik came to our neighborhood. They gathered us kids around them and then talked to our parents about enrolling us in school. They bought clothes, bags and school supplies for me and many other children in my neighborhood. The school was far away and Alo! Mik drove us to school, especially on rainy days. School was the starting point that brought me to where I am today, unlike many of my peers who married at the age of 12.

It wasn't always easy for me, as family circumstances forced me to work in a hotel in Durrës between the ages of 11 and 13. It was a delicate time, as I was in danger of dropping out of school, so I decided to quit my job and devote myself to school. My family supports me, especially my mother. She encourages us to continue our studies, as she herself didn't have the opportunity to be educated. In 2016, Alo! Mik helped us move to Kombinat, into a rented house. It was a new life for us. It felt like a dream. Everything seemed beautiful, the walls, the windows, the furniture. Even my father no longer had to work in the garbage to earn a living. He started working as a construction foreman. For years, I took part in activities at the OASIS center, which helped me with my studies, had fun and took part in many activities that helped me in my life. There, we did our homework, ate, took part in activities and played together. I also have fantastic memories of the summer camps I attended. When you're at a summer camp, you forget about reality and enter a beautiful, dreamlike world. I can say that in these camps I felt fulfilled, because I received a lot of care and love. That's why this year I decided to volunteer at Eden Park, helping the staff with various tasks. What I have received, I want to give to those hundreds of other children who, like me in these camps, experience love and care. Alo! Mik is a blessing from God for me and my family. My biggest dream is to finish university and become someone in life. I want to have a good job, not only for myself, but also to help my family, my sisters and brothers, so that they can all get an education and have a good life.

Arlinda

My name is Arlinda, I'm 24 and I'm the eldest daughter in my family. I have a brother and two wonderful parents. My passions have been modeling and television, but now I find myself much more in art and science. I majored in software engineering and after college, I took the plunge and went to Bible school. My journey through childhood and adolescence was fraught with difficulties due to the prejudice and harassment I suffered. The words "mountain girl", "pool cue", "toothpicks", "slims", etc. followed me all the way through high school. Hearing them over and over again, I accepted the bullying and continued to believe it defined me. I shut down and cried for hours because I didn't feel accepted in society. In 2010-11, I took part in Alo! Mik "Kids Games" program, which has remained close to my heart. People served with all their heart. There, I had the opportunity to learn a lot about faith. Programs like these have been a blessing and a growth for me both physically and spiritually. They have helped me to see myself and others with love, to accept and love myself as I am, and above all to believe that I am wonderfully made.

Having such beautiful memories and such a positive influence in my life, since 2015 until today I have been volunteering during the summer at camps organized by Alo! Mik in Eden Park. I want what I've experienced with Alo! Mik programs, other children can experience it too. It's an extraordinary motivation for me, because in these camps I see children thirsting for love, needing trust, a word of encouragement and God. The children generally don't want to leave the camp, because they feel safe, protected, loved and joyfully accepted. The children's tears at the end of camp and their transformation over the 5 days they were with us are a priceless treasure for me. I pray that through me and the work of Alo! Mik, these children



FROM BROKENNESS TO WHOLENESS

In a world that is profoundly broken, children are exposed to many risk factors—poverty, abuse, neglect, bullying, family dysfunction, and more. We know that these risk factors threaten the healthy development of our children, and we do everything in our power to protect them. However, despite our best efforts, the world continues to be a broken and dangerous place for many children.



As we become more aware of the threats children face to their wellbeing, we are also becoming more aware of the vital role that resilience plays. Resilience is simply the ability of children to bounce back from challenges and to overcome difficult life circumstances. Many factors contribute to children's resilience; however, one surprising positive factor is children's spirituality.

All children are spiritual beings. They express spiritual characteristics of curiosity, wonder, awe, natural dependency and trust as they interact with the world around them. Even very young children ask big spiritual questions: Where did I come from? Who am I? Does anyone care about me? How do I know what is right and wrong? As a result, truly holistic development work with children must always include their spiritual development.

As Christians, we believe that helping children develop a personal relationship with the God of the Bible is at the core of helping them grow healthy and whole. However, multiple research studies demonstrate that children's relationship with God can also help to protect them in the face of adversity. These studies suggest that a child's experience of God's presence may offer them comfort and peace in the midst of hardship. They also suggest that God's story can help children make sense of the world and suffering as it offers coherent answers to children's spiritual questions and helps them make meaning of their own stories.

Sadly, the world has always been a hard place for children and the Bible is brutally honest about that. Many of the children we meet in the pages of the Bible were shaped by a broken world, including Moses, Miriam, Joseph, Samuel, Naaman's servant girl, Josiah, Daniel, and Esther. These children, and many like them, experienced slavery, genocide, war, corruption, family disintegration, kidnapping, violence and more. However, in each of these examples, God not only provided for the child but invited the child to join Him in bringing wholeness within their broken worlds.

When children are given opportunity to explore the spiritual aspects of their personhood and to seek answers to their deepest heart questions, their spirituality is strengthened and so is their resilience.

Esther L. Zimmerman, PhD, Associate Chair—Undergraduate
Lancaster Bible College





“We feel very comfortable talking to you, as if we were a family together.”

L. S., mother of 4 children – OASIS

“The OASIS Center is “My Hero” because the center’s staff takes care of me, feeds me and supports me in tasks/activities. They are protecting me, because when I have problems at school, they are always ready to respond and intervene. So I don’t feel alone. That’s why I call them “my heroes”.

B. S., 10 years old – OASIS

“I’m very happy and grateful to be able to continue my high school studies.”

S.S., 15 years old – OASIS

“We moved into a new house after many years of living in extremely difficult conditions. Now we feel very comfortable in our new home. We can go to school in clean clothes and sleep very soundly.”

S. L., 12 years old – OASIS

“When I arrived at Alo! Mik, I was 8 years old. At first I was shy, but then I got used to it. I made lots of friends who respected and loved me. I also made friends with the staff, who offered me love. I’m very happy to be part of the Alo! Mik Foundation. There we do our homework, play, organize activities, have breakfast and lunch. I’ve been part of Alo! Mik for almost 3 years. The love given to me by my friends, my mother and the staff has never been given to me by anyone until now.”

N. S., 11 years old – OASIS

“

Alo! Mik gave me the opportunity to move forward, to study and to make lots of friends.

It's also thanks to them that I've come to know God. Alo! Mik is now part of my family. It has turned my dreams into reality.
I'm grateful to everyone who has helped me.

”

A. Sh, 17 years old - OASIS

“

God! Thank you so much for taking care of us every day from above! Thank you for making this camp possible for us, during which I met so many friends. Thank you for being with us every day.

Thank you for crying with us, for comforting us when we need it... thank you for supporting us every step of the way...
and thank you for the thousands of other things you've done for us.
Lord, I pray that my family, friends and loved ones will be well!

”

Camper - Eden Park

“

Personally, I've been volunteering at Alo! Mik for the past 2 years. For me, it's been an experience that has helped me grow spiritually and practically. I have also found that every member of the staff has been very attentive, welcoming not only me but all the other volunteers. They took care of everything we needed.

”

Melsi, volunteer - Eden Park

“

I'm grateful for the opportunity I was given and very happy that everything went as it should. I felt everyone's hospitality and gratitude. I hope I've passed on all the care and love I received to the children. It was in them that I found the motivation and inspiration to carry on, even when I felt tired.

”

Ana, staff - Eden Park

“

very grateful to God for everyone's heart to serve in such a beautiful work, doing it with patience, with love, with joy, without getting tired and without complaining.
May God bless you all very much!

”

Vila, Worship camp - Eden Park

“

Happy to have been given the opportunity to serve over 1,000 children at camps organized by this foundation. God worked mightily in these camps, both for the children and the staff.

Happy to have made new friendships and to have met Ruth and Sylvain, who cared not only for the children but also for the staff. Encouraged by the heart they had and still have for the children.

I can't wait to see where Alo! Mik will be even after 20 years.
I pray that God will be ever more exalted.

”

Arsea, volunteer - Eden Park



Grain of Wheat
INTERNATIONAL

OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER

A WORD FROM OUR PARTNERS



When I hear “Alo! Mik”, certain images come to mind. First of all, Sylvain & Ruth receiving this call to go to Albania to take care of street children, especially those living on the Sharra dump. My heart is touched when I see their love for these children whom nobody wants to help, for these families who are often despised. Their actions have gradually shown them that there is a God who loves them. Then the desire to have an office for their team and a plot of land outside the city to build a camp for the children. The vision is broad; it's not just about inviting underprivileged children, but also about serving the churches. To help everyone discover the beauty of nature and learn to praise God. Sylvain and Ruth are visionaries and pioneers, they don't shy away from any challenge, but refuse to work without a team. It's to their team and to both of them that I offer my congratulations on the 20th anniversary of Alo! Mik.

Anne-Christine Bataillard, International President (2000-2015)
Grain of Wheat International

Congratulations on the 20th anniversary of Alo! Mik in Albania. Thank you to Ruth & Sylvain and all the partners of Alo! Mik partners for your dedication to seeing children thrive and be agents of change in their communities. We are fortunate to witness the long-term ministry you and your associates have exercised, working in depth with many families and children over many years. Thanks to God's faithfulness, the lives of many have been affected, as 20 years is the time it takes for an entire generation to grow up and be a blessing to their peers, family and future generations. Thank you for your dedication and servant heart and thank you for your contribution in “A World Without Orphans Europe” to see children flourish, families strong and churches committed.

Richard Procter – *WWO Europe*
Lubo Hlavacka - *WWO Global*



The successful collaboration between World Vision Albania and the Alo Mik Foundation is an inspiring story of shared commitment to helping children in need. Since 2012, through the organization of summer camps and other activities, this collaboration has provided numerous opportunities for over 3,000 children to participate in activities where education and fun form an unforgettable experience for them. In 2023 alone, 480 children and teenagers had the opportunity to develop their personal skills, forge new friendships and acquire important values.

Eljona Boce Elmazi, Director
World Vision Albania

I came to know this foundation thanks to the contribution and cooperation we've had to improve the quality of care for the children at our institution. Thanks to Alo! Mik's contribution, our children spent a vacation at the Eden Park campsite this year. There, the children forged new friendships, took part in a variety of sporting, artistic and spiritual activities, and increased their self-esteem and motivation to adopt positive behavior. We also drew up a rich training plan for the professional development of our institution's staff in the field of childhood trauma. Cooperation was also extended to the field of deinstitutionalization. During this short period of managing this institution, I have felt a great deal of support for the challenges we face in securing and protecting the lives of the children in our care. I am sure that this cooperation will continue, and I am happy to have such friends around me in my mission. Congratulations on your great achievements and other successes, dear friends!

Valbona Imeraj, Director
Orphanage Zyber Hallulli, Tiranë.



OUR PATH INTO THE FUTURE

Priorities of Alo! Mik

in the coming years:

We CARE for...

... children and families through direct, holistic intervention.
... those who work with them (including our own staff) by developing spiritual, relational and practical care.

We EQUIPE...

... children and families to become agents of change in their own lives and communities.
... childcare workers and professionals to provide care that changes children's lives.

We MOBILIZE...

... childcare workers and professionals to reach out beyond their own comfort zones to children.
... churches and families to respond to God's call to care for the most vulnerable.

We CONNECT...

... children and families with the local church.
... children's workers and professionals to exchange and work together to bring about large-scale change for children.
... local evangelical actors with each other to build God's Kingdom of love and security for children, and with public institutions for greater and recognized impact.

Our interventions



COMMUNITY CENTER
Services for children
and families at risk



TRAUMA & CRISIS CENTER
Trauma and crisis services and
training



**CAMP & CONFERENCE
CENTER**
A place for hopegiving
experiences



TRAINING & NETWORK
Support for children's ministry

THANK YOU !

*"I have come that they may have
life, life to the full."*

Jesus (John 10 v 10)



www.alomik.org
info@alomik.org
+355 69 40 43 184