

# IMPACT

April 2025

Dear Friend,

In Southeastern Albania, a young girl's life was marked by hardship and tragedy. Born into an impoverished family, her future seemed bleak.

However, with NG Gjirokaštër's steadfast support, she found hope. Enrolled in our after-school program, she received meals, emotional support, and the opportunity to grow academically and socially. She even composed a heartfelt thank-you letter to our staff, expressing gratitude for their care.

Ledja's struggle is not unique. Homes in the remote villages served by our Social and Medical Improvement (SMI) team are in dire conditions, starkly contrasting with the comfort most of us know. These families struggle daily, and many rely on the support we provide.

We hope this Impact offers a glimpse into life in this remote corner of Europe, where your generosity continues to transform lives, offering dignity and a brighter future.

In gratitude,

Your Impact team



In the after-school program, Ledja receives much more than help with her homework - here she is last summer, all smiles!

## A Story of Resilience and Hope

A few years ago, seven-year-old Ledja was just beginning her second year of school in Gjirokaštër, Albania. Coming from an extremely poor family, where both parents illiterate, her future was uncertain. In a region where unemployment is high and opportunities are scarce, many children like Ledja are left with no choice but to collect scrap metal or plastic to help their families survive.

Tragedy struck when Ledja's ten-year-old brother was out with their father collecting metal to sell for a small amount of money. While working, he was hit by a car and killed. The devastating loss left Ledja's family in deep grief, struggling not only with their daily hardships but also with the pain of losing their son.

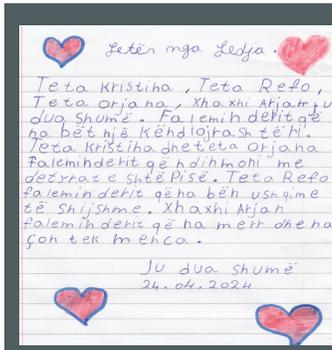
In the midst of their heartbreak, NG Gjirokaštër stepped in to support Ledja and her family. She was enrolled in the after-school program, where she found a safe and nurturing environment. At the center, she received daily hot meals, participated in social and emotional support activities, and gained a sense of community with other children. Over time, thanks to the dedication of the staff, she slowly began to smile again.

As the years go on, Ledja continues to grow and thrive in this program. She has received academic support, nutritious meals, and—most importantly—care and encouragement from the staff. She has become more confident in herself and loves to play with her friends at the program. She is thriving in ways her parents never had the opportunity to, even writing a thank you note to the staff at our center!

This simple letter was more than just words—it was a testament to how education, care, and support can transform a life. Ledja now has opportunities her parents never did, and her future is filled with hope.



Ledja enjoys her daily meal with friends (2022)



*"Aunty Kristina, Aunty Refo, Aunty Orjana, Uncle Arjan, I love you all so much. Thank you for building us a new playground. Aunty Kristina and Aunty Orjana thank you for helping us with our school homework. Aunty Refo thank you for the delicious food that you cook for us. Uncle Arjan thank you for driving us from the school to the center. I love you all so much."*



Playing in front of the soup kitchen (2025)

**Your support makes stories like Ledja's possible.**

**Together, we are changing lives, one child at a time.**

## The People We Reach - And Those We Can't

Recently, while exploring Nehemiah Gateway's extensive photo archive in search of an image to illustrate a newsletter article about domestic violence in Albania—and the ways the organization is working to support its victims—an unexpected discovery emerged.

Among countless images was a collection depicting homes in the remote mountain villages surrounding Pogradec. These are the homes of individuals regularly served by the Social and Medical Improvement (SMI) project, which provides food, physical therapy when needed, and, just as importantly, companionship. One particular set of photographs stood out: a home in especially dire condition, nestled in a secluded corner of the region.

For many living in wealthier nations—or even in more developed areas of Albania—it can be difficult to fully grasp the harsh realities of life in these villages. Here, people aren't thinking



about long-term dreams or ambitions; they are simply trying to survive. Each day is a struggle. Even with the unwavering dedication of the SMI team and the continued generosity of donors, life for these individuals remains incredibly challenging.

The impact is meaningful—firewood, food, and moments of human connection—but limited. The need far exceeds available resources. For every person reached, there are many more still waiting for help. It is a sobering reminder to be grateful for what we have—and to do what we can to uplift those who need it most.

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