

# IMPACT

February 2024

Dear Friend,

If you have picked up this Impact to read about our latest activities, you have been educated. A basic education is something that we all consider standard and don't think about the possibility of not having access to formal learning or schooling.

Formal education can be a luxury that many students in our Amaro Tan school are blessed to receive. It gives children from disadvantaged backgrounds a start on the path of leading independent and dignified lives. It has the power to transform their families and communities.

We're pleased to tell you Paola's story, an impressive young Albanian woman who has overcome many obstacles to pursue her education. Paola has had the opportunity to access quality education through Nehemiah Gateway thanks to her start at a young age at our Amaro Tan school in Pogradec, Albania. And you dear friend help make that possible and fuel her journey.

We hope you are inspired by this issue!

Your Impact-team



## A Brighter Future Within Reach

Paola's high school graduation exams are about to begin in a few weeks. She is in year 12 at Nehemia high school in Buçimas, but that is anything but a given!

Talking to the friendly young woman, you would never guess how difficult her life is. The family of five lives in a tiny apartment - one kitchen, one bedroom. A serious illness has left the father permanently bedridden and the mother has to look after him. The parents have no chance of earning a living, they cannot make ends meet without help - a typical case for NG's Amaro Tan program. They receive regular support and Paola's two sisters can also go to school with NG.

Some time ago they had to face yet another crisis, their home was destroyed by a fire. The whole NG staff stepped in and gifted the proceeds from their charity volleyball tournament to replace destroyed appliances and furniture.

Paola still thinks back a little wistfully to her first school years at Amaro Tan School. "I felt very good there. From primary to middle school, we were always together, like a little family. I really enjoyed lessons. The teachers were extremely helpful and always there for us." (Read more about the Amaro Tan program on the next page.)

Moving on to Nehemiah High School meant a whole new surrounding, new friends, and different academic demands. Paola successfully tackled these challenges. The teachers commend her for being very reliable, always on time for class and school-related events. Paola says: "I usually go straight home after school and study for 2-3 hours." (It must be difficult to find the quiet needed to study in their overcrowded apartment.) Having a perspective and the chance to realize her dreams gives her the needed energy. She loves economics and dreams of studying law one day.

We are excited to see where her path will take her.

Elona Rira, principal of Nehemia School, is a big fan of the scholarship program, which offers tailored help for needy children and their families.

She explains:

*„It is our mission and our heartfelt desire to help especially those students who come from families to whom society closes its doors and treats them as less valuable.*

*Watching these students struggle to become someone, to change their reality and that of their families, and to be a companion in this process of becoming who they are, is a challenge, an encouragement and a joy for all of us as teachers.*

*We hope and wish that during her years at our school we have also transmitted our values to Paola, and that the academic preparation will open new doors for her future. The goal is for Paola to not only be able to help herself, but also to be a light for her family and the community she will live in“.*

## HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

Paola is one of a group of six Amaro Tan graduates who seized the opportunity to attend Nehemia high school, which ranks among the best in the country.

There are 18 more students at Nehemia school whose tuition, food and transport are covered by scholarships, mostly children whose families are in need through no fault of their own and are not able to pay for school. Others found donors who support them with a personal sponsorship.

For only €2,200 per year, a child can attend Amaro Tan School - unfortunately, the extreme price increases in Albania in recent months have also had an impact here. For high school it is €2,300 per year - an investment that makes a tangible difference in the lives of children, their families, and their communities.

## THE AMARO TAN PROGRAM

Life is not easy for children from the Roma community. In Albania, they belong to a disadvantaged minority, having to fight prejudices from childhood on, and live in great poverty. They often have little chance to ever lead a successful, self-determined life.

This is where the Amaro Tan program comes in, which is much more than a school. For over one hundred children, it is a refuge that offers protection, care, and above all a good school education. The children come from Roma and Balkan Egyptian background, but also destitute Albanian families. The program is tailored to their needs. There is a kindergarten and school through 9th grade, school meals, dental care, a hygiene program, family counseling, after-school activities like sewing- or crafts-courses, and programs that enable Amaro Tan pupils to pursue higher education.

A few times a year, the children are sent home with food packages containing some essentials that will last around two weeks, depending on the family.



School meals at Amaro Tan school

The aim of Amaro Tan is to provide a safe environment away from trafficking or abuse, to further expand the educational possibilities of these children, and to improve social and medical aid.

After finishing the 9th grade, some of the graduates enter high school like Paola, others begin vocational training and a few – after high school – have even made the leap to NG University and graduated with a bachelor's degree. in "Economy and Businesses."

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