

IMPACT

October 2024

Dear Friend,

In a fast-paced world, core values like forgiveness, respect, and compassion are often overlooked, yet they are essential for building thriving societies. In this Impact, you'll learn how NG instills these values in our Albanian students, shaping character that influences their families and communities.

Through innovative teacher training, we cultivate a values-oriented lifestyle among students, reaching beyond classrooms into areas of deep need in the local community. Our field trips nurture lasting mercy and compassion among the children.

At Amaro Tan, our school for at-risk children, values as practised by Jesus are central to our curriculum. We are seeing a positive shift as more families recognize the importance of this educational opportunity, building a strong sense of community among diverse backgrounds.

We are deeply grateful to you, our friends and supporters, for enabling us to continue and expand our efforts in Albania and beyond! Thank you!

Your Impact-Team



'I have rights' - the children learn about values in kindergarten.

Strong Values, Strong Impact

Nehemia School swims against the tide

For most of us, certain core values are a natural part of life. We recognize that principles like forgiveness, respect, integrity, compassion and honesty contribute to long-term satisfaction and fulfilment, fostering thriving societies. In contrast, a decline in these values leads to ruin, as history shows.

Elona Rira, principal of our Nehemia School in Albania, remembers: "I was talking to a student about values and non-violent conflict resolution. The girl sadly stated: 'That only works here on the Nehemiah Gateway campus, not at home in our city.' Society has become wild; the law of the jungle applies and anyone who has no money and no assertiveness is considered worthless."

For Elona, this is an incentive to push the topic of values high as a school priority. The teachers agree and are happy to receive help and guidance for their lessons, as this was never part of their formal training.

Faced with this challenge, NG co-workers Andrea and Gian Paul Ardüser truly shine. They organize creative training sessions for the teachers, provide inspiration and are always ready to listen. Since the last school year, they have also started visiting the classrooms to encourage children to embrace a values-orientated lifestyle. Andrea states: "We need to create an awareness of the current decline in values."

“Children’s social skills suffer because of constant, uncontrolled mobile phone use, and there are also many dangers lurking in the digital world. Who can you trust? What should guide your decisions? These are just some of the points we address.” Gian Paul adds: “This leads naturally to our foundational values. It’s not about religious education, but about life.”

A unique part of the school’s program involves home visits to individuals in need alongside NG’s social workers. This experience opens the eyes of many children to the reality of great poverty and hardship in their own town and neighborhood which they were previously unaware of. They return home deeply impacted and more appreciative. Values like mercy and compassion gain new significance.

The Royal Rangers scouting program led by the passionate and creative NG co-worker Anila Sinani, is a valuable after-school addition. Meetings for the younger classes attract many enthusiastic students, and parents overall express pleasure with this option. Some initially hesitated to have their young children attend - but when a child pleads and expresses great interest, even the



Students from Nehemia School and Andrea Ardüser (back row) visit families in remote villages together with Anila from the social team (front right).

strictest of fathers often relents. School principal Elona is heartened by the trend: “More and more former students are now enrolling their children in our school. One mother, who was a hyperactive student and had many challenges remarked, ‘There is no school I trust more than my Nehemia School!’”

VALUES AT AMARO TAN

At our Amaro Tan school for children from marginalized communities, Christian values are a matter of course. After all, Amaro Tan is one of the few private schools in Albania specifically established to create a safe and distinctive educational environment for at-risk children.

School principal Marin Piqoni has noticed a positive change. In the past, families with limited education viewed the school with suspicion, and the principal often had to persuade parents to let their children attend. Now these parents regularly bring their children to school without hesitation or the need of persuasion. They now better understand the value of a unique school education, which emphasizes not only academic knowledge but also the development of the whole person.

Marin has observed another significant development: “An increasing number of families who are not Roma or Balkan-Egyptian are requesting admission for their children. A few years ago, this was quite rare due to strong prejudices against marginalized groups. However, the school’s success speaks for itself. People see our students, their behavior, and their growth and achievements and suddenly, it no longer seems to be an issue for their own children to sit in class with peers of darker skin and form friendships.”



Little students enjoy their lessons at Amaro Tan School.

For social worker Franko Ali, himself a former student at Amaro Tan, values as practised by Jesus are central to both his work and his life. He states, “It’s important that everyone at the school – students, their parents and families, teachers and staff, as well as older visitors to the soup kitchen who are particularly close to my heart – learn these values.” Parents especially benefit from the parent meetings, where they can discuss questions and concerns and collaborate on concrete solutions.

Strong values truly have a strong impact!

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