

St Jeanne Antide Foundation

2015

*Contributing to*  
**family wellbeing**  
*and*  
**social inclusion**

at community level and beyond





**Contributing to family wellbeing and  
social inclusion at community level and  
beyond**

**the work outcomes of the St Jeanne Antide  
Foundation  
in 2015**

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*SOAR* Service – survival of abuse with resilience  
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Acknowledgement for cover illustration: Tony Macelli

Affiliate membership:

- Anti-Poverty Forum (APF) – Malta
- Mental Health Association, Malta
- Malta Health Network
- Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ
- SKOP (Solidarjetà u Koperazzjoni)

SJAF is registered with the Malta Qualifications Council as a provider of informal lifelong learning opportunities for students in compulsory education (SLC 1196).

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# Introduction

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## *responding to the expressed unmet needs of vulnerable individuals and families*

The St Jeanne Antide Foundation (SJAF) is a registered social purpose non-profit organisation. It is the social care services arm of the Sisters of Charity. Its overarching aim is to provide professional support services to very vulnerable individuals and families who are sliding into poverty and are socially excluded. It is administered by a Governing Board with a Chief Executive Officer and is registered as an NGO with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations (VO/0005).

SJAF runs services from four sites, apart from home visits to service users. Two of the sites are Family Resource Centres. The one based in Ħal Tarxien is called Ċentru Antida and serves families from the localities of Ħal Tarxien, Paola, Fgura, Ғaż-Ғabbar and Santa Luċija. In Ғaż-Ғabbar, SJAF utilises space at the Dar Sagra Familja of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition to run its fortnightly mental health clinic for family caregivers of mentally ill persons. The Family Resource Centre in Birżebbuġa is called Ċentru Enrichetta and serves families from the localities of Birżebbuġa and Marsaxlokk.

SJAF also runs a day centre for vulnerable women involved in street prostitution or trying to live a life away from prostitution; the centre is called Dar Hosea.

The Foundation works in partnership with community-based organisations as well as state agencies and NGOs that are national in scope. Since 2007, it has regularly carried out street outreach work as a means of identifying and extending support to hard-to-reach vulnerable families, assisting them as close as possible to where they live.

Since its establishment, the Foundation has set up a number of core services. Being based in a local community, SJAF has naturally evolved into an organisation that is at the service of local communities. Its scope is local, national and international.

SJAF is an affiliate member of the Mental Health Association, the Anti-Poverty Forum – Malta, the Malta Health Network, the NGDO Forum SKOP (Solidarjetà u Koperazzjoni) and Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ. It is also registered as a provider of informal lifelong learning for students in compulsory education.

### **Mission**

The Foundation is run, and its mission fulfilled, by a community of Sisters and lay people working in partnership systematically in teams for the support and self-empowerment of socially excluded persons, families and minority groups. As a Christian community, it aims to reflect the love of God in all that is done, and to see and love Jesus Christ in persons who are in need. The mission of the Foundation is to be present for individuals and families who need

someone who can listen to them with compassion, link or guide them to appropriate existing support services, support them in the restoration of their dignity, and guide them towards self-reliance. Looking holistically at persons in need, the Foundation's mission is to give moral and spiritual support to such persons.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the Foundation are:-

- (a) to identify, understand and raise awareness about under-served and un-served categories of excluded or vulnerable persons;
- (b) to develop and implement programmes in support of identified under-served and un-served categories of vulnerable persons, families, and minority groups;
- (c) to support and train a number of persons to make their own contributions to society and to persons in need;
- (d) to provide the opportunity and training to service users so that they themselves can provide services to others in need;
- (e) to be open to voluntary service of young people who would like to offer time and energy at the service of others in order to gain experience and insight;
- (f) to create links with overseas agencies that work in line with our mission, to share experiences, give and get support, and widen our vision.

### **Governance**

A Governing Board is responsible for strategic planning, policy development and financial oversight. Board members come from such diverse backgrounds as social work and nursing, education, counselling, financial management, social welfare service planning and management and overseas development work. The CEO is a non-voting member of the Governing Board that meets monthly.

### **Services**

During 2015, the Foundation ran the following services:

#### **1. Two community-based Family Resource Centres:**

**Ċentru Antida** in the heart of Ħal Tarxien . Open from 7.30am to 5 pm daily in winter time (sometimes later as well) and from 7.30am to 1.30 pm in summer.

..Social Work: home-visits, outreach work, advocacy, referral, information, emotional support provided in the catchment areas of Ħal Tarxien, Paola, Fgura, Ħaż-Żabbar and Santa Lucia. Social work supp

..Volunteer Handymen in support of vulnerable and poor families.

..Learning Support opportunities for children and adults including self-esteem & literacy groups.

..Volunteering opportunities, included supported volunteering for service users.

..Volunteer Befrienders for lonely, home-bound elderly persons.

..Recycling Bazaar as a fundraising tool + in-kind support to hard-up families.

**Ċentru Enrichetta** in Birżebbuġa: Open Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 8am to 5pm.

..Community Social Work including home-visits, outreach work, advocacy, referral, information, emotional support.

..Family Literacy Support: courses for parents; support to struggling learners;

..Sub-office of the Malta Community Chest Fund (MCCF) on Tuesdays between 9 and 11.30am.

**2. SOAR Service:** advocacy and support by survivors for victims and survivors of domestic violence ([soarmalta@gmail.com](mailto:soarmalta@gmail.com)). The service includes a preventive dimension through its workshops for youth on dating violence.

**3. LWIEN Service** in support of family caregivers of persons with mental health problems: family consultations by Senior Psychiatric Nurse, support groups, home-visits, social work.

**4. IRENE Service** in support of very vulnerable women involved in street prostitution: includes Dar Hosea drop-in centre, social work, accompaniment, medical screening for STIs and sexual health education.

**5. Emotional Freedom Service** for persons wanting to be free from their anger, fear, grudges and resentment or other emotional distress.

**6. Overseas Development Projects:** SJAF works with partners in developing countries to formulate anti-poverty projects. It has also arranged for public funding of such projects in Pakistan, Central African Republic, South Sudan Malawi and Peru.

### **Human Resources**

In 2015, the staff and volunteer complement of the Foundation was made up as follows:

7 Social Workers, two of whom left in April and two were subsequently engaged; one of the Social Workers is Manager of Dar Hosea drop-in centre forming part of the Irene Service;

1 Senior Psychiatric Nurse;

1 Family Learning Support practitioner;

1 Foundation Administrator;

1 Ċentru Antida Family Resource Centre Administrator;

1 SOAR Service Co-ordinator;

1 Emotional Freedom Service practitioner;

11 Social Support Workers within the Irene Service; 8 of whom are Volunteers;

1 Admin Support/ Reception Worker

2 Volunteer Bazaar Managers;

1 Volunteer nurse who visits homebound sick and lonely persons;

4 professionals who provided their services on a pro bono basis: a lawyer, a doctor, 1 Notary, and a Management Consultant;

1 Volunteer Counsellor;

1 MCAST ICT student on a summer work scheme funded by MITA

1 Literacy Teacher from the Directorate for Lifelong Learning, Ministry of Education and Employment.

1 handyman on a Community Service sentence.

In total, 121 Volunteers provided a service during the year. Volunteering hours for 2015 totalled 8,843 – equivalent to 4.25 full-time workers. Their roles varied from that of reception workers to learning support, mentoring, befriending, supporting vulnerable women, admin

support, handymen and others. Were the hours of service of volunteers to be remunerated at a minimum of €5 for every hour worked, their service would have cost the Foundation €44,215.

### **Practice Placements**

The Foundation hosts a number of students seeking a social service agency where they can practice their field of study. During 2015, 6 students undertook a practice placement in the following fields: Gestalt Psychotherapy (1), Learning Support (5 from Sixth Form).

### **Spirituality**

The mission statement of the Foundation, besides the specifically social imperatives, includes also this sentence: “As a Christian community, it aims to reflect the love of God in all that is done, and to see and love Jesus Christ in persons who are in need.” An activity of SJAF that contributes to the process of aligning oneself in this way is the Centring Centering Prayer group. Mainstream Christian tradition states clearly that the three major forms of prayer are *oratio* (with words), *meditatio* (with thoughts), and *contemplatio* (without thoughts). At Ċentru Antida, weekly meetings are held. The Centering Prayer group is open to all who are seriously interested in contemplative practice beyond thoughts and feelings.

Personnel of the Foundation maintain a friendly, humour-filled atmosphere in relating to each other - this is detected and appreciated by visitors and service users. The Christian orientation and personalities of the main workers including volunteers, and the policies of the Foundation, have created an environment and an approach to vulnerable service users that has resulted in a certain ethos, culture and atmosphere.

Service users frequently comment on the attentive listening, acceptance, peacefulness and love they find in the SJAF premises, and on the humane and personal approach in the field. The economic, psychological, emotional and social freedom and self-acceptance found by distressed or vulnerable people through the work of the Foundation recovers human dignity. Not only do the staff love the service users but the latter also come to discover their own capacity to love. Spontaneously or through SJAF encouragement, some service users even offer their voluntary service to help others. These are signs of the healing power of the divine at work through love.

### **Acknowledgement to donors**

The Foundation acknowledges the significant contribution, during 2015, of the following donors:

The Malta Province of the Sisters of Charity

Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties and Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity

European Economic Area Malta NGO Fund managed by SOS Malta

STRINA 2014/ Malta Community Chest Fund

Dar tal-Providenza

The Alfred Mizzi Foundation

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

APS Bank

The President’s Award for Creativity in conjunction with the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts



Helping Hands Magazine  
Aġenzija Żgħażaġh A4U Scheme  
Eurolifts Ltd.  
Le Spigolatrici Della Chiesa  
People Who Care Fund, Crimsonwing  
MITA  
Parroċċa Haż-Żabbar  
Russian Grand Priory of Malta, Order of St John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller  
The Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem  
HSBC Bank Malta plc  
Andrew Galea & Associates  
Department Parole and Probation  
St Peter Foundation  
Social Assistance Secretariat (SAS), Malta Catholic Action  
Forestals Ltd. for CSR volunteering work at Esther House.  
Many benefactors and members of the general public who contributed donations.

### **Financial Management and Annual Audit**

A financial audit is carried out annually by the auditing firm Andrew Galea and Associates; the firm provides this service on a pro bono basis as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility policy. The audit report of the previous year was submitted to the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations and to donors.

### **Fundraising activities**

The Foundation organised a number of fundraising activities during 2015. A volunteer couple contributed over 15 hours a week each to run a twice-weekly Bazaar in Hal Tarxien . Staff organised two fundraising activities. Grants for core services and projects were obtained following the submission and approval of grant proposals. Full details of grants received are made available to all major donors. The Province of the Sisters of Charity, which is the founding body of the Foundation, continued to provide significant financial backing, three rent-free premises, in-kind support and the salary of the CEO. The October issue of Helping Hands Magazine was in aid of the Foundation.



# Ċentru Antida Family Resource Centre

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## *reaching out and supporting families at community level*

Ċentru Antida is a family resource centre in ̄al Tarxien serving the support needs of families from the localities of ̄al Tarxien , Paola, Fgura and Santa Luċija. It has been operating since 2007 and has a welcoming service hub through which referred families can access a range of support initiatives that include Social Work, non-formal education courses, support groups, peer-to-peer support offered by survivors of domestic violence, literacy assessments and learning support for children and parents, mentoring for young persons, therapeutic emotional freedom support, mental health consultations with a Psychiatric Nurse and therapeutic handicraft-making sessions.

Ċentru Antida was open daily during the week from 8am to 5pm or later in winter time and from 7.30am to 1.30pm between mid-July and mid-September. The facilities of the centre were often accessed by other organisations. In order to accommodate the needs of highly anxious service users who cannot easily take a few hours leave, the Centre opened at 7am twice a week.

Ċentru Antida is based on the groundfloor of 51 Tarxien Road in ̄al Tarxien , part of the Provincial House of the Sisters of Charity. It is accessible, having a welcoming environment with space for group-work, courses, offices, counselling rooms, socialising and relaxation space, and a kitchen. There are showers for temporarily homeless persons as well as a library for young and adult service users. In 2015, the Centre was visited by an average of 20 persons a day. Moreover, the Sisters of Charity enable the Foundation to make use of a large hall for group activities and a conference hall for seminars and courses accommodating 200 persons.

Ċentru Antida is managed by an administrator who is responsible for the management of a team of Volunteer Reception workers and a team of Volunteer Handymen and provision of back-up support to practitioners across services and production of a monthly electronic magazine which is widely disseminated.

### **Bazaar**

Linked to Ċentru Antida is an adjacent fund-raising Bazaar that is fully managed by two volunteers. This initiative is a means of providing low cost or free good-quality clothes to service users and a place to which lonely persons turn to for a chat. Families who are aware of the bazaar regularly visit it to either donate knick knacks, home furnishings, books, toys, clothing and children's items and to make purchases. The centre has become a recycling hub, with many visitors dropping by to pick up items for their handicraft-making pastime while representatives of other support voluntary organisations drop by to pick up items for financially hard-up members. Donated items are also shared with other organisations that need available items.

### **Non-formal education opportunities**

During 2015, a number of non-formal education opportunities were offered to service users at Centru Antida. An open-ended literacy group for vulnerable young persons over the age of 18 ran during the scholastic year and resumed in late September. The teacher was provided by the Lifelong Learning Directorate of the Ministry of Education and Employment. Four courses on self-esteem were offered to service users who expressed the need to develop self-confidence, decision-making ability and self-esteem. Two depression support groups ran for ten 90 minute sessions per group. An art group ran for a short period of time. Learning support sessions were held every Friday throughout the scholastic year and resumed in early October. This service benefited 14 children from service using families who were tutored on a one-to-one basis by Volunteer Tutors. Mentors met their mentees at the Centre for weekly sessions. Training sessions for different groups of volunteers were held throughout the year.

### **Volunteer Handymen**

Two Volunteer Handymen undertook 142 trips in support of service users – transporting furniture and household items from donor families to families needing them and running weekly errands for the different service sites of the Foundation. In total, they covered 1,667 kilometres on errands and home-visits co-ordinated by Social Workers to 31 vulnerable single-parent households that needed basic repair and maintenance work at their homes.



# Ċentru Enrichetta Family Resource Centre

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## *reaching out and supporting families at community level*

Ċentru Enrichetta is the second Family Resource Centre run by the Foundation. It is based in the locality of Birżebbuġa in the South-Eastern region of Malta. Start-up funding from the European Economic Area Fund for NGOs managed by SOS Malta enabled the Foundation to branch out in this under-served locality.

The services offered at the Centre respond to the identified needs of vulnerable individuals and families in this community of over 11,000 with a growing multi-cultural base. In 2015, Family Resource Centre workers undertook regular street outreach work in order to better identify and support vulnerable individuals and families with tenuous links to mainstream district and national support services. In collaboration with community-based organizations and others working at regional and national levels, a range of initiatives were initiated to respond to identified needs.

Following discussions with community-based organisations and street outreach work, a family support service started to take shape. Family-support actions during the year included community social work, family consultations for relatives of chronically mentally ill persons, and family learning support including courses for parents. Throughout 2015, the service team supported single parent households, frail elderly who feel lonely and on the periphery of the community, families sliding into poverty, and families with one or more members with chronic, undiagnosed and untreated mental illnesses or who are non-compliant with prescribed medication.

The current premises became operational as a Family Resource Centre in early 2015 following refurbishment funded by the Province of the Sisters of Charity. It was also the Sisters of Charity who allocated the use of the premises to the Foundation. Ċentru Enrichetta also welcomes other organisations to make use of its facilities; these included the Malta Community Chest Fund (MCCF) run by the Office of the President of Malta and the South Eastern Region of the *LEAP!* Project of the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS) and *Passi & Beyond*, a youth voluntary organisation. MCCF established its first community-based branch at Ċentru Enrichetta to enable families to access its in-kind support schemes with ease with the additional benefit of having access to the Centre's social work support service. *LEAP!* Project personnel from the South East region, on the other hand, ran their summer 2015 courses at the Centre.

The Centre was open on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week with a team of two Social Workers, a Family Learning Support specialist and a Volunteer Reception worker. The Foundation's Psychiatric Nurse undertakes home visits with Social Workers whenever a family consultation is indicated.

The Centre's Social Workers undertook extensive outreach work in 2015 so as to step up the identification of families in need of support. House-to-house outreach was undertaken in 48 streets, covering 1,568 households and 30 shops. Brochures were disseminated to households during outreach work as well as via the Local Council's website and through the Parish Church.

An article reached households through a Church-based magazine which reaches households across Malta.

### **Family Support**

During 2015, 181 vulnerable individuals from 101 families benefitted from support interventions. These families accessed social work support, consultations with Psychiatric Nurse, literacy assessments and tuition and assistance in accessing other services. Self-referrals and referrals by relatives increased as Ċentru Enrichetta became more known to residents. Outreach work enabled team members to support 77 hard-to-reach families with tenuous links to mainstream support services.

In 2015, discussions were held with the Head of the local state Primary School in order to identify parents of struggling learners who could be trained in strategies to support their children's learning journey. This initiative is in line with the Foundation's philosophy of extending non-formal education opportunities to parents in order to increase the chances of breaking the inherited cycle of vulnerability. From July 2015, identified parents were taught strategies that nurture and support their children's (and their own) educational journey. During the summer, literacy assessments of 23 referred children were carried out with the participation of their parents and literacy work undertaken with each of the children and parents so as to ensure better learning outcomes during the new scholastic year.

On 18th August 2015, at Ċentru Enrichetta, the Malta Community Chest Fund (MCCF) of the President of Malta started operating a weekly (Tuesday) office for vulnerable families needing in-kind support. The MCCF official saw families every Tuesday from 9 to 11 am.

### **Family Literacy Support**

*'Since my daughter started coming here, just a short while ago, she is already reading better. She is also asking me to read with her.'* – a parent

During the summer months, Ċentru Enrichetta offered a family literacy programme to families to support the attainment of basic skills in reading and writing to learners who are identified as being at risk in this key learning area. The service was offered to learners in Year 1, being a crucial year for the learners, so that they would not start their school life with a deficit.

The learners were referred for the service by the state primary school, the Parish and social workers. The families were contacted and an invitation for an assessment was also issued. The assessment was first carried out in the Maltese language. Once families accepted the invitation, an appointment was made for the family to visit the Centre. Parents were invited to be present during the assessment process of their child. Following the assessment, the learner's needs were identified and strengths and weaknesses targeted.

A *learning plan* was discussed with the family. Parents were invited to participate in the sessions which were held once a week for 90 minutes. During the sessions, the learners were assigned different tasks. Sessions started with auditory training consisting of blending and decoding letter sounds in words.

*Free writing:* The learners were asked to write about anything they wanted, be it an experience, a toy, or something they did the previous day. Texts were not corrected for spelling



mistakes as the objective behind such tasks is to subtly nudge them to write. Their attention was drawn to one word only. The learners then wrote in their 'diary' on a daily basis at home.

The *blending task*: The learners were given letter sounds to blend and form words. The family member accompanying learners participated in this task so as to acquire the skill needed in order to repeat this task at home with the child. To facilitate home support, a list of words was given to enable the parent to obtain a quick reference to identified words.

The *decoding task*: the learners were asked to identify the sounds which make up a given word. They were also asked to count the number of sounds in each word on their fingers since this helps them, at a later stage, when they start writing as it will enable them to ensure that they have the right number of sounds which make up the words they choose. A number of young struggling learners might omit vowels when writing. This exercise gives them the skill to self-correct the words.

Another task involved a *discussion on a given picture*. The learners were asked to describe what they see, thus building a story. This gives children confidence when to summon up the courage to write stories themselves. They were then invited to *colour the picture*. Depending on the time factor, children colour the picture during the session or at home.

During the session, *reading* is given utmost importance. Reading text presented is simple and repetitive before moving on later in the session to books. The reason behind this prepared text is to give the learners confidence so they attain the satisfaction of saying 'I can read'. Learners need immediate results if they are to succeed.

The next task is a *comprehension* exercise. During the process, a short text and questions are presented and the learners read the given text, with as little prompting as possible and answer the questions, first orally then in written form. This session ends after the learners read their assigned book, which is loaned to them every week, a reading record is kept, and a new target is given.

Having an adult family member attending the sessions proved to be highly beneficial for both the child and the adult. Learner benefiting from the family learning support programme managed to acquire reading and writing skills while the accompanying parent acquired skills on how to guide and support their child. The process proved to be beneficial for those parents who needed to develop their own reading and writing skills. The fact that the methodology used gave quick results encouraged both children and their parent in their learning journey.

Feedback from the senior management team at the local state school about the children that were referred by them to the programme was very positive; it led to the planning of four different type of courses for adults which will be offered for parents from both Birżebbuġa and Marsaxlokk in early 2016.

### **Collaboration with the Parishes of Birżebbuġa and neighbouring Marsaxlokk**

Regular meetings were held with the Parish Priest of Birżebbuġa to strengthen the family referral system. The volunteer members of the parish Diaconia (service) Commission co-worked with the team Social Workers during some of the outreach days. The Parish donated hampers for service users in financial difficulties. Team members occasionally attended the Diaconia Commission meetings to update members about service developments.

In 2015, discussions were held with the Parish of the neighbouring harbour town of Marsaxlokk leading to the planning of home-visits to around 80 families which will take place in January 2016.

### **Networking with other service providers**

The service team held meetings with key community-based organisations (CBOs), NGOs and state agencies in order to strengthen the link between the services offered at Ċentru Enrichetta and those offered by other entities. One team member took part in the regular meetings of the regional stakeholder network of the *Leap!* project of the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity. The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) assisted the team by translating the Centre's brochure into Amharik, Somali, and Tigrinya. Close ties were developed with the school management team at the local state primary school. An agreement was reached with the Malta Community Chest Fund of the President of Malta that resulted in the opening of a branch office that operates weekly on Tuesdays from 9am to 11am. LEAP! Project summer courses were all held at Ċentru Enrichetta to encourage use of the project infrastructure and facilities by other organisations.

Between the 8th and 13th June a team member from Ċentru Enrichetta formed part of a Maltese delegation of the *LEAP!* Project's stakeholder Networks which visited Dublin to get a first-hand experience of how other service providers are networking effectively for the benefit of vulnerable families. An article about this study visit featured in the June issue of SJAF Magazine and focused on a visit to a Family Resource Centre in Dublin. In July, the Ministry for the Family's South Eastern Regional team of the *LEAP!* project held four courses for Birżebbuġa residents at Ċentru Enrichetta. Course titles included: English Conversation, Art Therapy for Children, Drama for children and Being Youth.

### **Premises**

Initially, the Parish of Birżebbuġa provided the service team with access to an office where referred service users could be welcomed. After some months, the Sisters of Charity provided the Foundation with rent-free use of a ground-floor premises which used to house a kindergarten. The Province of the Sisters of Charity provided funds for the refurbishment of the building; works were completed in March 2015. All furnishings were acquired from donations from families. A final cleanup was undertaken by workers from Forestals company as part of their CSR policy.

*Official Opening:* Monday 19th October saw the official opening of the Centre. Collaborators, donors and stakeholders were invited to the event. Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro, President of Malta, took part and, in her speech, highlighted the invaluable work of the Foundation through its services, including its two Family Resource Centres in the community which she considers a very effective tool in reaching hard-to-reach vulnerable families at community level.



# The IRENE Service

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## *in support of vulnerable women involved in street prostitution*

The Irene Service was made possible by a start-up grant from the European Economic Area (EEA) NGO Fund for Malta managed by the NGO - SOS Malta. The grant covered the period from October 2013 to June 2015. From October 2015, the Foundation received funding for one year from STRINA 2014 of the Malta Community Chest Fund. A grant from a benefactor enabled the Foundation to refurbish a town house which today houses the Dar Hosea drop-in centre for service users.

Irene has become a fully-fledged core service of the Foundation. Its primary focus is on providing a space where women can explore, with dignity, alternatives that are open to other citizens. Women involved in street prostitution come to the attention of mainstream service providers for reasons other than prostitution. These reasons include long-term drug abuse, criminal acts such as stealing, and child neglect. Prostitution is not a primary focus of support of existing key service providers.

As it stands today, the service has a team of 22 workers whose roles range from Social Support Work roster duties at the Foundation's Dar Hosea drop-in centre (13), to volunteers who run the Prison Women's outreach (5), and 6 pro bono practitioners who are members of the Service Strategy Team; 2 have a double role.

The Dar Hosea drop in centre is managed by a social worker who is mentored and guided by the service sexual health expert and service leader. The sexual health expert is a medical doctor who has been providing her services on a pro bono basis since the planning stage. Being the most experienced professional in the service team, she holds a vital leadership, mentoring and practitioner roles which include running of the STI clinic at Dar Hosea, running weekly sexual health educational sessions for service users, participating in the Dar Hosea management team meetings, guiding the Social Support Workers, and chairing the twice yearly service strategy team meetings.

Apart from the Dar Hosea drop-in centre, the service runs weekly women's outreach sessions in prison which focus on handicrafts making as a therapeutic and educational tool. This initiative has become very popular among the female prisoners. Women were encouraged to submit their poems for publication in the SJAF monthly e-zine.

### **Target group**

The target group of the IRENE Service are vulnerable women involved in street prostitution who have complex underlying issues, lead chaotic lifestyles and face other difficulties that such circumstances present. At the core of their vulnerability to coercion, exploitation and inducement to become involved in prostitution are childhood sexual abuse, the tendency to enter relationships with abusive men, the habit of self-medication with illegal substances so as to cope with their harsh, risky and violent reality, serious health problems, and mental health problems. Some show signs of cognitive and social impairment and many are in

conflict with the law; and some are repeat offenders. A significant number are controlled by pimps or partners having drug related problems which women end up funding and sustaining through their involvement in prostitution.

Although prostitution in Malta is legal, loitering is not. The most vulnerable and poor amongst women involved in prostitution are the ones who operate from the streets. Given their visibility in offering their services, they are prone to frequent arrests and imprisonment.

Women are reached through a number of outreach approaches. These include briefing sessions to service providers across key sectors in order to stimulate referrals; word-of-mouth promotion by service users themselves; street outreach in certain localities; and a therapeutic handicrafts making programme at the women's division in prison.

### **Service elements**

Throughout 2015, the Foundation continued to strengthen and consolidate the Irene Service operations. Today, the service provides three levels of support:

*Level 1:* meeting women's basic needs for food, clothing, rest space, personal health and hygiene, being treated with respect and love. *Level 1* support is provided through Dar Hosea – a drop in centre having all the necessary facilities for meeting basic needs. Dar Hosea is a very welcoming house which provides a quiet and peaceful space that highly contrasts with the harsh reality of working in the streets with all the risks that it involves. During 2015, the Centre was open daily on weekdays from 10am to 4pm.

*Level 2:* access to social work support, accompaniment to key appointments when required, and access to lifelong learning opportunities provided by the Foundation itself and by other providers. *Level 2* support is provided by a team of Social Support Workers most of whom provide their services on a voluntary basis, and Social Workers. At the drop-in centre, arts and crafts are practised and a small library is available. Work with women's families is also undertaken to help mend fractured relationships.

*Level 3:* access to sexual health education and screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs): Level 3 services are provided by a medical doctor who is specialised in sexual health and addictions services. This specialist runs a weekly clinic for STI screening at Dar Hosea itself, liaises with the health sector for processing of medical tests and provides regular individual and group sexual health education to service users.

### **Outreach approaches to identify and support potential service users**

Service team members undertake outreach work to attract women to Dar Hosea and related support services. In order to step up referrals, collaborative relations have been developed with practitioners from other agencies. These include the Probation and Parole Department, social work services, social security, addiction services, and NGOs operating in prison. Home visits to referred women continued to be undertaken so as to connect to women's families. Service users were encouraged to promote the service through word of mouth and to bring other women with them to Dar Hosea.

Additionally, each week, a team of five volunteers took turns to run a two-hour therapeutic and educational handicraft-making session in prison. This initiative was started in December 2014 in order to connect to women who might benefit from the Irene Service after their release from prison, as well as a way of remaining in touch with service users serving a prison term.

This outreach measure has today become part of the Prison Education Service. Some women inmates have contributed poems for publication in the monthly SJAF e-zine.

### **The Dar Hosea drop-in centre**

Dar Hosea has a welcoming home environment. Many benefactors donated second hand furnishings and other household items, helped out with voluntary work to clear out the house, repair furniture and sew certain items. A Procedures Manual was completed. In February 2015, an activity programme was drawn up to enable service users who drop by to have a meaningful structure during the time they spend there.

The Dar Hosea team consists of a Manager and a team of Social Support Workers, the majority of whom are volunteers headed by a Service Management Committee. The staff team of Dar Hosea meets monthly to discuss issues of common concern and to plan for the month ahead. Since March 2015, a Social Worker assumed the role and function of Manager of Dar Hosea. Being based at the centre, the Manager is responsible for the operations, team co-ordination and casework.

To date, the IRENE Service has provided different supports to 65 women. Additionally, work was also undertaken with the families of 16 of these 65 women.

### **STI Clinic**

STI screening and sexual health education sessions were available weekly on Thursdays from 3pm to 5pm. These sessions on sexual health matters were highly appreciated by the women since they are very much linked to their harsh reality and health risks.





# The SOAR Service

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*support and awareness, research and advocacy by survivors of domestic violence*

In 2015, SOAR became a core service of the Foundation based at Ċentru Antida Family Resource Centre in Hal Tarxien . Its scope remains national. The service operates with one full time service co-ordinator, one volunteer administrative assistant, and a committee made up of survivors who volunteer their time and effort in support of others. SJAF Social Workers provide support whenever their intervention is required.

## **Key elements of SOAR**

During 2015, the SOAR service had four key elements:

- *The running of a survivors-led support group.* This aspect of the service included interviewing new members, meeting them individually to provide emotional support and information, effecting referrals to other service providers, the organisation of regular social activities for members, and management of the SOAR social media channel for women wishing to connect to SOAR.

- *Advocacy initiatives* during 2015 were grounded in qualitative insider research. The advocacy function of SOAR additionally involves the writing of articles for print and online publishing as well as participation in TV and Radio programmes highlighting problematic social issues.

- *Educational programmes for prevention and awareness*, using purposely designed non-formal educational tools and publications for schools, youth groups and other groups.

- *Publication* of resources and booklets in English and Maltese on healthy and unhealthy relationships, domestic violence and the initiatives that SOAR undertakes.

Since its launch in 2012, the SOAR service has connected and supported 101 women. In 2015, a supportive relationship was maintained with 48 women.

## **Research and Publications**

*Research:* During 2015, SOAR embarked on an insider qualitative research exercise whose methodology included semi-structured in-depth interviews with 22 victims residing in shelters and members of SOAR; a thematic data-analysis leading to the identification of key commonly experienced problematic issues; and focus groups with SOAR members to further explore the identified themes. SOAR members subsequently prepared papers for presentation during the December 4<sup>th</sup> National Conference organised by SOAR. The exercise led to the formulation of recommendations for policy makers. Research outcomes will be published in an illustrated book scheduled for mid 2016; it will be made available for victims, survivors, students, researchers, practitioners and the general public.

*Publications:* On the 19th of June 2015, the SOAR story book for young persons entitled *Caterpillar in a Jar* was launched at the President's Palace at San Anton gardens. The story is written by a survivor and reflects realities that children experience as they grow up in a home

where domestic violence occurs. The story goes on to describe how a child witness grows into a teenager who experiences a controlling relationship with her boyfriend and the courage she needed to walk away from it. The book may be enjoyed as an independent short story or as part of a tool for learning on dating violence.

*Il-Mela Darba Tiegħi – ġrajjet veri tagħna t-tfal*: children who experienced domestic violence, contributed to the published collection of stories by child service users of the Foundation. They also created illustrations for their stories. The book may be used by teachers in primary schools to discuss difficult life situations in an interesting and non-personal way.

*Helping Hands Magazine*: The 70<sup>th</sup> issue of the was dedicated to the subject of domestic violence. SOAR published five in-depth articles spread over ten pages, about domestic violence issues for the general public.

*Flimkien Magazine*: An interview with a SOAR member was published in the November 2015 issue of *Flimkien* magazine which is widely disseminated in Maltese households by the Diocesan Curia.

### Developing and using Tools for Learning

In November, SOAR became a finalist in the National Learning Tool Fair organised by European Union Programmes Agency in Malta (EUPA) in conjunction with the national youth agency Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ. SOAR presented the newly designed tool for learning *Caterpillar in a Jar*. This initiative provided SOAR with the opportunity to participate in the tenth International Tool Fair in Budapest, Hungary between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> December, and to showcase various informal learning activities used by SOAR to raise awareness among youth on elements of healthy and unhealthy relationships. SOAR uses these tools for learning in various secondary and post-secondary school settings and youth groups as part of its action towards prevention of domestic violence. A more formal style of session is available for adults on the subject of Domestic Violence. A diary-style article about the Hungary Learning Tool Fair was published in the issue number 95 of the SJAF e-zine for the months of November and December.

### Workshops for youth

During 2015, over 621 young persons accessed a 3-hour workshop at their school or youth group on domestic violence, dating violence and unhealthy relationships. The following is a list of workshops led by SOAR during the year.

28/1/2015		2 sessions on <i>Dating Violence</i> held with two groups at M.A. Refalo Higher Secondary School in Rabat, Gozo. (40 youths)
24/3/2015	–	4 sessions on Dating Violence held for all forms 4 and 5 male students from St Clare College, Sliema. (200 youths)
25/3/2015		
21/4/2015		Session on <i>Domestic Violence</i> held with Social Care students at MCAST vocational college. (9 youths)
10/5/2015		Session on <i>Domestic Violence</i> held with 4 <sup>th</sup> year law students from the University of Malta. (8 youths)
2/6/2015		Session on <i>Domestic Violence</i> held with students in level 4 BTEC Health and Social Care course at MCAST vocational college. (8 youths)
3/7/2015		Session on <i>Abusive Relationships</i> held with women inmates at the Corradino Correctional Facility (CCF). (8 women)

5/8/2015		Session on <i>Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships</i> held with participants of the <i>Being Youth</i> course participants, organised by the <i>LEAP!</i> Project of the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity at Ħal Kirkop. (4 youths)
11/8/2015		Session on <i>Dating Violence</i> held with youth members of the Adolescent Day Programme Group, Aġenzija Appoġġ, held at Valletta. (6 youths)
26/8/2015		Session on healthy and <i>Unhealthy Relationships</i> held with participants from the <i>Being Youth</i> course organised by the <i>LEAP!</i> Project of the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity at Ċentru Enrichetta, Birżebbuġa. (8 youths)
26/10/2015	–	5 sessions on <i>Equality and Dating Violence</i> held with all Forms 1 to 5 at the Immaculate Conception School, Ħal Tarxien . (over 250 youths)
9/11/2015		
17/11/2015		Session on <i>Dating Violence</i> held with young persons from the MGRM Rainbow Support group. (8 youths)
19/11/2015		Session on <i>Equality and Dating Violence</i> with Form 5 students at the Girls Secondary School, Blata l-Bajda. (12 youths)
9/12/2015	–	4 sessions on <i>Dating Violence</i> held with students from the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS), Pembroke. (60 youths)
10/12/2015		

### **Collaboration and networking with other organisations**

*Shelters Network* - SOAR was invited to join the *Shelters Network* which meets from time to time to share information and discuss ongoing issues and changes in the field of domestic violence. SOAR participated regularly in these meetings of representatives of organisations providing a service to victims of domestic violence.

*Men Against Violence* - SOAR collaborated with *Men Against Violence* at St Clare College in Sliema during March.

*Gender Studies Department, UOM* - On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence on Women, SOAR participated in a panel discussion on Domestic Violence at University of Malta.

*Merħba Bik Emergency Shelter* – SOAR approached *Merħba Bik* shelter for permission to undertake qualitative insider research with residents. Following approval by the Shelter, a number of residents took part in the SOAR research. A number subsequently became members of SOAR and participated in the December 4th National Conference organised by SOAR.

*Pre-conference Networking* – SOAR held networking meetings with various stakeholders in the field of domestic violence: the Legal Aid Agency, Police Vice Squad, Family Mediation Service, Rainbow Support Group, the Commission on Domestic Violence, the Domestic Violence Services of Aġenzija Appoġġ, a Magistrate, the Gender Studies Department and various policy makers. These meetings served to establish contact with those stakeholders SOAR needed to meet and to reinforce collaboration with those it was already collaborating with. This initiative served as an opportunity to learn in more depth about the work of key stakeholders and to share concerns and ideas for further collaboration.

### **Turning the tables: survivors of domestic violence plan and lead a national conference**

In 2015, SOAR organised the first ever survivor-led national conference on domestic violence entitled *My Protection from Violence, My Human Right: My Government's Responsibility – a Call to Action*. The process was an intense one for SOAR on many levels. It involved holding

discussions with key stakeholder representatives, planning and carrying out insider qualitative research, data analysis, preparation of papers, voice and presentation training, and conference organisation.

Between May and July, SOAR conducted interviews with 22 survivors of domestic violence to identify common experiences. The data gathered was subsequently thematically analysed. The identified themes were then discussed in focus groups that were held over the summer months. SOAR held networking meetings with various stakeholders mentioned during the focus groups to glean their perspectives. Papers were written based on the evidence compiled and these were presented by survivors during a national conference held on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2015, attended by over 150 guests. The presentations were backed up with matching slides quoting articles from the Istanbul Convention that specifically addressed the issues being mentioned by each paper presenter. Workshops were held and various recommendations were made by those participating.

The conference was a call to policy makers to implement the Istanbul Convention that Malta had ratified in 2014.

Some of the recommendations generated by the Conference workshops included the following:

1. Government should consider the possibility of setting up an on-call multi-disciplinary team composed of practitioners from the fields of social worker, health, police, and psycho-therapy, to act as one coordinated response system. Such a measure would work similarly to the multi-disciplinary and multi-agency Sexual Abuse Response Team (SART).
2. The design and delivery of a preventive educational programme on responsible relationships introduced from a young age. Training should target both girls and boys, and due attention should be given to stereotypes about gender roles and gender power. This will assist in reducing the harmful belief that men 'by default of their gender' have a right to power over women.
3. Trained professionals need to be available at the police stations when victims lodge a report. Such a measure will ensure that a proper needs and risk assessment is conducted.
4. Preferably to recommendation '3' above, conference participants suggested that a one-stop Police Unit be set up to handle all reports made to the police by victims of domestic violence.
5. A need was felt for the setting up of an informal group of stakeholders to address domestic violence through a more practical networked approach.
6. The law needs to be changed to make it possible for perpetrators of domestic violence to lose their parental right to give consent for important therapeutic interventions aimed at the wellbeing of their child or children. There are many cases where children do not attend school or participate in therapy sessions because the father refuses to sign the consent form for change of school and/or therapy.
7. As a solution to parents who refuse to pay child maintenance, it was suggested that the child maintenance money determined by the Court should be paid to a fund managed by the Court. It would be the court that credits the custodial parent. In this way, the mother will never have to suffer the distress generated by late or no payments. This

measure will ensure that harrowing regular contacts between perpetrator and victim are avoided.

8. Perpetrators who are fathers need to be made aware of their responsibilities towards their children. Fathers would be expected to attend rehabilitation and parent-craft courses by court order.
9. Custodial parents should inform the Heads of School about their family circumstances.
10. A Perpetrators Register should be started similar to the register of sex offenders. In the UK, this measure is called Clare's law. It gives domestic violence specialist Police the ability to disclose information to the potential victim when women make a request about their new partner's history and the police decide that a risk does exist for her and her children.

The outcome of the SOAR research and conference recommendations will form part of a book publication scheduled for mid 2016. The research, Conference and publication were made possible with grants from The Voices Foundation (2014) and the President's Award for Creativity (2015).



Photo: SOAR members who presented papers at the December 4th Conference



# The LWIEN Service

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## *supporting family caregivers of mentally ill persons*

Family caregivers of mentally ill persons constitute a category of citizens who lack support in fulfilling their challenging and overwhelming care responsibility. This service combines office-based family consultations with home-visits and community outreach work. Through regular street outreach work, a significant number of hard-to-reach families are identified and supported.

As is borne by practice, family caregivers of mentally ill persons are highly prone to become overwhelmed and depressed. Constant caregiving becomes a major family stressor. Through this service, the Foundation comes in regular contact with distressed family caregivers whose financial means are diminished, constraining the family to sell assets, abandon one's job, close a business and doing whatever it takes to pay professionals privately so as to cope with the constant strain of caring for the mentally ill family member. It is the experience of the Foundation that primary family caregivers rarely seek help for themselves, limiting their access to state and private mental health services for their ill family member.

Throughout 2015, the schedule of twice-weekly family consultations was maintained. In order to keep up with the demand of families needing sustained high support, clinics were also held twice a month on a Saturday at other sites offered by other organisations in Ħaż-Żabbar, I-Iklin and iż-Żejtun. Each week, an average of 22 family consultations were held.

Apart from supporting families who come from all over the island, the service is intrinsically linked to social work interventions provided by the Foundation's Social Workers and the input of other in-house practitioners.

### **Caregiving families supported**

In 2015, the Lwien Service provided intense support to 165 individuals from 116 families. These families were supported through a total of 988 office-based sessions and 138 home-visits. During the year, the Service organised two Depression Support Groups for which 21 participants attended.

### **Effective liaison with the mental health system**

Maintaining effective links with the community mental health services is crucial to the wellbeing of family caregivers. Hence, the service liaised closely with state and NGO service providers in this key sector. Referrals both ways continued to take place throughout 2014. Liaison with mental health services for sufferers was maintained to maximise positive outcomes for the families involved.

### **Publications**

On Thursday 16th July 2015, the Foundation in partnership with the Mental Health Association launched the book *Bdoti fil-Maltemp – kif tieġu ħsieb qarib b'mard mentali*. The book launch was hosted by Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta at the Secret

Garden of the San Anton Palace. A number of family caregivers spoke publicly about their experience of caring for a loved one with a mental illness.

*Bdoti fil Maltemp* is edited by the CEO and the Senior Practitioner (Psychiatric Nurse) of the Foundation. Foundation staff researched material for the book and made use of advice given to family caregivers that make use of the Lwien Service of the Foundation at the end of each chapter. The book contains 18 chapters focusing on the following:

- 12 chapters on specific common mental illnesses; each provides practical tips that enable family caregivers to strengthen their caregiving skills;
- a chapter on commonly prescribed medications prescribed by psychiatrists;
- a chapter on relapse and prevention strategies;
- a chapter on the experience of siblings;
- 3 chapters on how to free ourselves of self-stigma, the important role of the family in community care, the effects of constant and intense caregiving on the family members, and the importance of self-care to prevent the likelihood of caregivers becoming chronically depressed and ill themselves.

*Bdoti fil-Maltemp* is the third publication aimed at empowering family caregivers of mentally ill persons to become more effective in their caring role. All three were produced in collaboration with the Mental Health Association (MHA). One is a translation of the first joint publication *//-Kwiekeb fid-Dlam Jixegħlu* produced in e-book format. The idea behind these publications is to provide self-help and educational literature in Maltese for family caregivers who do not read English and hence cannot access resource materials through the internet.



# The Emotional Freedom Service

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## *learning to overcome negative emotions*

Calmness, happiness, freedom. The best things in life are free. Persons who need calmness, happiness, or freedom may access the Emotional Freedom Service of the Foundation, which has been functioning for a few years. It is a healing, self-education and self-empowerment process that normally removes emotional distress and teaches service users to relax and how to avoid accumulation of distress in the future, to live in inner peace.

In 2015, the service was delivered to 57 cases of individuals. An average of 2.15 hours contact time per session was involved; each person was given a total of 3.88 hours on average. On average, each person attended 1.98 individual sessions. The Service helps willing persons who wish to melt away emotional distress and blockages, even those that have been a thorn in the flesh for years, such as deep anger; fear; hurt; anxiety; bad memories; self-sabotage such as feelings that one is worthless; remorse; unusually long grieving; unrealistic fears (phobias); stress and lack of relaxation practices; non-forgiveness; and others.

Workshops for residential institutions are held at appropriate locations as requested. Individual sessions for the public are held at one of the premises of the Foundation, most often the Ċentru Antida Family Resource Centre. Most people need two to three sessions of 2 hours each, some need four. Home-based and overseas meetings are conducted through Skype. Appointments may be made through the social workers of the Foundation.

The service is delivered by a registered, certified Advanced Practitioner of Emotional Freedom Techniques. The service is holistic, gentle, and good-humoured. Sometimes it includes a spiritual dimension where appropriate, depending on the needs and the religious affiliation of the service user. All religions and none are of course welcome. The methods used do not require any belief of any kind; willing sceptics are also welcome. Anyone interested in the religious or scientific implications of the methods used can study the Foundation's new website at [www.antidemalta.org](http://www.antidemalta.org). The Emotional Freedom Service can be found in the menu under Services.

Many emotional distress problems start in childhood as a result of parental mistakes or absences together with all small children's inability to overcome emotional problems by themselves. In other cases, the emotional distress has been caused by difficult adult experiences, including abuse, traumas and special life transitions, stressful lifestyles, and lack of knowledge about relaxation methods. Many people don't know how to release emotional distress except by distracting themselves from it ("switch on the TV"); in such cases the distress often accumulates out of reach. Repressed or suppressed or long-standing emotional distress causes unhappiness, lack of peacefulness, and stress. It creates cortisol, and destroys DHEA. Cortisol promotes wrinkles, belly fat, and decay of mental powers

(cognitive decline). DHEA is the body's rejuvenation hormone, keeping skin supple, renewing cells, and so on.

Past beneficiaries of the service have included individuals of all ages and employment status, single-cause therapeutic or social support groups, as well as residents or staff at residential institutions.

Here are the words of a few of the service users from the past year. Names have been changed.

**Anrita** came out of the room very satisfied with the first session, and looking very well, according to a mental health professional who happened to meet her at just that time in the lobby. Anrita said that she has realised that she has a lot of work to do on herself. After the work on her own inner child she said *"It is calming; I feel better."*

**Bertha** wrote, months after her 4 sessions, *"I wanted to thank you for all the help you gave me this year. It allowed me to stay sane and survive in rather difficult times. I feel very good emotionally right now and I hope all will be ok moving forward."*

**Carlo**, a senior and weakened victim of severe workplace stress, said after a single session, *"After our meeting I got the courage to not simply resign, but to do something positive about my employment conditions."*

**Pamela** had emotional hurts, anger, and serious issues with a close relative who died years ago. She was fighting herself and her own emotional remorse and guilt at not having been able to resolve her issues while her relative was alive. She has been unable to visit the relative's grave. During the 4th and final session she said, *"My anger at her is gone. I don't have any uncomfortable remorse. I have stopped having bad dreams about her. I am now ready to go to the cemetery; in fact I did go, but did not enter because it was raining."* During this session, she managed to forgive the relative, and felt great relief.

**Mandy** wrote after her first EFT session, *"I can't believe how different I feel after our session. It is late now, and I am getting ready to go to bed - but I wanted to let you know how grateful I am for the time that you spent working with me today. On many levels, I feel stronger and more at peace. What an amazing technique!"* One week later she wrote, *"I had never felt peaceful – ever! But I have been walking around in a state of peace since our session one week ago. I have been feeling centred. Also, I am amazed at my own reaction to an incident which would normally have stressed me out – I easily coped with it. I was giggling away with my son when we went out together; I have been in a state of overall happiness."*



# Social Work Across all Services

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## *nurturing self-determination and self-empowerment journeys*

Social work practice cuts across all SJAF services. Social Work team members have the opportunity to practice within a generic service such as the Ćentru Antida and Ćentru Enrichetta Family Resource Centres as well as with a specialised service such as Lwien (mental health), Irene (women involved in prostitution) and SOAR (women victims of domestic violence and survivors). The team of practitioners meets monthly to review work outcomes, share developments and plan collaborative work processes. Practitioners identify areas for further personal and professional development on the basis of which continuous professional development opportunities are offered with input from both external resource persons and Foundation staff.

### **Casework in 2015**

There were 373 new cases of families in distress involving 543 individuals in the supportive relationship. Apart from these 373 families, 65 families continued to be supported from the previous year and 26 cases were reactivated from previous years, bringing the total of families receiving support in 2015 to 464. Within the same year, 245 cases were closed. As the supportive social work relationship develops, Social Workers work in consultation with practitioners from other disciplines and often refer service users internally for further psycho-social support. The work and output of other practitioners engaged in specialised service provision is highlighted in other sections of this report. Social Workers were responsible for the following interventions:

- 2,288 office-based sessions;
- 873 home-visits;
- 218 visits to government departments and other service agencies with or on behalf of service users;
- 248 advocacy reports;
- 70 supervision sessions accessed.

State agencies topped the list of referrals of families to the Foundation's services in 2015. In fact, 24% of new cases originated from state agencies. Of the total for the year, 5% came from state educational establishments. The 24% case referrals from state sources originated as follows:

- 33% from Aġenzija Appogg;
- 21% from state schools;
- 19% from health services;
- 10% from the Criminal Justice System;
- 11% from Local Councils;
- 6% from other state sources.

Of the total 373 new case referrals for 2015, the different referral sources included:

- 24% state agencies;
- 17% self-referrals;
- 16% identified by SJAF staff from street outreach work;
- 12% from Parishes;
- 9% by relatives;
- 6% by other service users;
- 5% by voluntary organisations;
- 5% by private practitioners;
- 5% by friends;
- 1% by neighbours.

#### Locality of residence of 373 families referred in 2015

Locality of residence	No. of families	% of total new cases
Birżebbuġa	71	19%
Paola	55	15%
Hal Tarxien	30	8%
Haż-Żabbar	26	7%
Fgura	14	4%
Santa Luċija	6	2%
Valletta & Floriana	12	3%
Central Malta	40	10%
Iż-Żejtun	10	3%
Other localities	109	29%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100%</b>

54% of new cases came from the catchment localities of the two Family Resource Centres run by the Foundation – i.e. Birżebbuġa, Paola, Hal Tarxien, Haż-Żabbar, il-Fgura and Santa Luċija.

#### New cases of vulnerable families supported between 2007 and 2015

Year	Individuals	Families
<b>2015</b>	543	373
<b>2014</b>	424	288
<b>2013</b>	481	320
<b>2012</b>	473	298
<b>2011</b>	540	324
<b>2010</b>	412	284
<b>2009</b>	185	150
<b>2008</b>	231	169
<b>2007</b>	121	93
<b>TOTAL for 2007-2015</b>	<b>3,410</b>	<b>2,299</b>

## Number of families and percentages by main presenting problem – 2015

Main presenting problem of referred families	Number of families	% of total
Mental illness & problems faced by caregivers	116	31
Women involved in street prostitution	42	11.3
Elderly chronic ill health, including dementia	37	9.9
Emotional problems	36	9.7
Multiple relationship problems at home	27	7.2
Financial difficulties	22	5.9
Lack of basic skills	20	5.4
Couple relationship difficulties & separation	20	5.4
Domestic violence	17	4.6
Challenging behaviour	13	3.5
Homelessness (5) & substandard housing (4)	9	2.4
Substance abuse	8	2.1
Disability related difficulties	4	1.1
Unemployment	2	0.5
<b>TOTAL →</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Outreach work as an approach to the identification of hard-to-reach vulnerable families

Street outreach work continued to be a key tool in community social work practice at the Foundation. The modality used leads to the identification of un-served and under-served categories of vulnerable and poor persons. The rate of service users identified through outreach work in 2015 was 16%. Other organisations openly acknowledge the effectiveness of this approach. Parishes where this approach was used by Foundation personnel express high satisfaction at the way very vulnerable families in the community are being identified, befriended and supported. During community outreach home visits, team members introduce themselves, discuss the services being offered by the Foundation in the community and engage in a discussion about their perceived needs at community level.

Throughout 2015, the Social Work team carried out over 120 hours of community outreach. Assessments of identified families are mainly carried out through follow-up home visits and office-based sessions.

### Support resource tools for Social Workers

Social Workers had a number of positive support resources which service users accessed for enhanced wellbeing:

*Volunteer Befrienders:* A group of 12 Volunteer Befrienders assisted Social Workers by providing home-based fellowship to lonely home-bound service users from Hal Tarxien , Paola and il-Fgura. Each Befriender is linked to a Social Worker for guidance and mentoring. Befrienders have a code of practice to guide them and meet to discuss their work and how it is

impacting the lives of the persons they support as well as their own life. Issues of boundaries, confidentiality, practical helping tips and links with relatives are often revisited.

*Volunteer Mentors:* Six Volunteer Mentors were matched with an at-risk young person. The matching process for mentors and mentees is critical to the development and maintenance of an enduring supportive relationship and enhancement of the positive development of mentees. Mentors provide sustained relationships with a young person who needs support, guidance and assistance. Mentoring is a powerful support tool for the development of self-esteem, self-control and emotional growth of young persons whose parents are either unable or refuse to provide care and support. At the core of mentoring is the belief that if caring, concerned adults are available to young people, the young person will be more likely to become successful adults themselves. Care was taken to identify optimal personal characteristics, skills and longer term availability of mentors. Mentoring was augmented with other services such as learning support and parental support.

*Family Learning Support:* Social Workers referred parents who were finding it difficult to support their children's learning journey to 4 types of courses designed in-house for this purpose. Courses covered practical strategies which parents could adopt to stimulate their children's skills in oracy, reading and writing in both Maltese and English.

*Volunteer Handymen:*

*In-kind support:* Very vulnerable service users requiring high support had access to food items, second hand furniture and furnishings, clothing, books, toys and baby items. Such items are available through a Bazaar which recycles quality items donated by families. The Secretariat for Social Assistance (SAS) regularly approved tiny cash grants as emergency help for families. Items such as computers-for-families were sourced through the CSR mechanism of a number of companies.

*Non-formal adult education:* Social Workers encouraged service users to indicate their interests so as to access existing non-formal as well as formal adult education and training activities run by the state and NGOs at both local and national levels. In cases where service users were still fearful of accessing mainstream opportunities and in cases where no opportunities existed to fill their expressed need for adult learning, Foundation staff created opportunities through the two Family Resource Centres. Hence, during 2015, groupwork was provided in the areas of literacy, caregiving, overcoming depression, self-esteem, art and handicraft making.

*Handicrafts production group and handicrafts class:* The handicrafts production group was started in late May 2015. Volunteers were recruited externally and internally through Social Workers who encouraged skilled services user to tap into this therapeutic resource. The Handicrafts production group met regularly to produce quality crafts from recycled materials on three mornings a week. In 2015, the group participated in five public events and fairs to sell their products. Service users

*Volunteering opportunities for service users:* Social Workers continued to encourage service users to volunteer as part of their personal growth journey. Fifteen service users became volunteers in 2015.



### **Children's book**

A social worker worked on the development of a creative writing group for child service users leading to the publication of *Il-Mela Darba Tiegħi – ġrajjet veri tagħna t-tfal*. Led by a Writing Process Tutor from the Malta Writing Programme of the National Literacy Agency of the Ministry of Education and Employment, the children wrote personal stories of their reality back home. They also created illustrations for their stories, which are meant to be enjoyed by adults and children alike. A well known children's book illustrator worked with the children to illustrate their story. Each story contains illustration by the child-author and the illustrator herself. The book may be used by teachers in primary schools to discuss difficult life situations in an interesting and non-personal way. The funding for this initiative came from the President's Award for Creativity.



# Volunteering at the Foundation

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## *opportunities for active citizenship*

Volunteering is a cornerstone of the Foundation's mission. The Foundation encourages and nurtures volunteering within its range of service provision, in line with three of the Foundation's key objectives:

- to support and train a number of persons to make their own contributions to society and to persons in need;
- to provide the opportunity and training to service users so that they themselves can provide services to others in need;
- to be open to voluntary service of young people who would like to offer time and energy at the service of others in order to gain experience and insight.

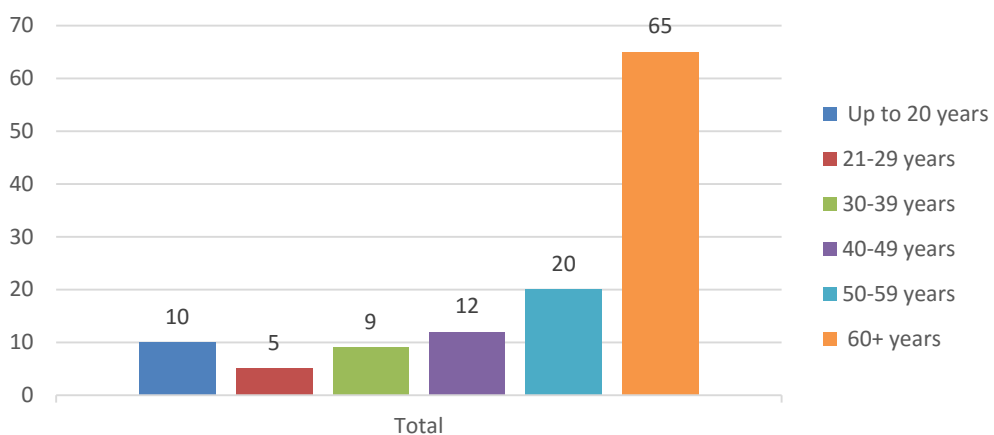
Volunteering is an opportunity for people to engage in meaningful activities beyond their personal and professional spheres. Irrespective of one's age, Volunteering has several impact outcomes:

- it draws a person, away from self-centredness, towards an understanding of, and compassion for others;
- it significantly enhances a person's sense of well-being that is often not derived from other spheres of life;
- it injects meaning in an often materialistic lifestyle devoid of altruism;
- it provides an opportunity for forging new friendships;
- it makes it possible for social care organisations to create new, creative and effective ways of supporting vulnerable individuals and families;
- it creates the fabric of a robust welfare society;
- above all, it is a powerful way of living one's faith and stimulating hope in lives that are bereft of kindness, respect, dignity, love and compassion.

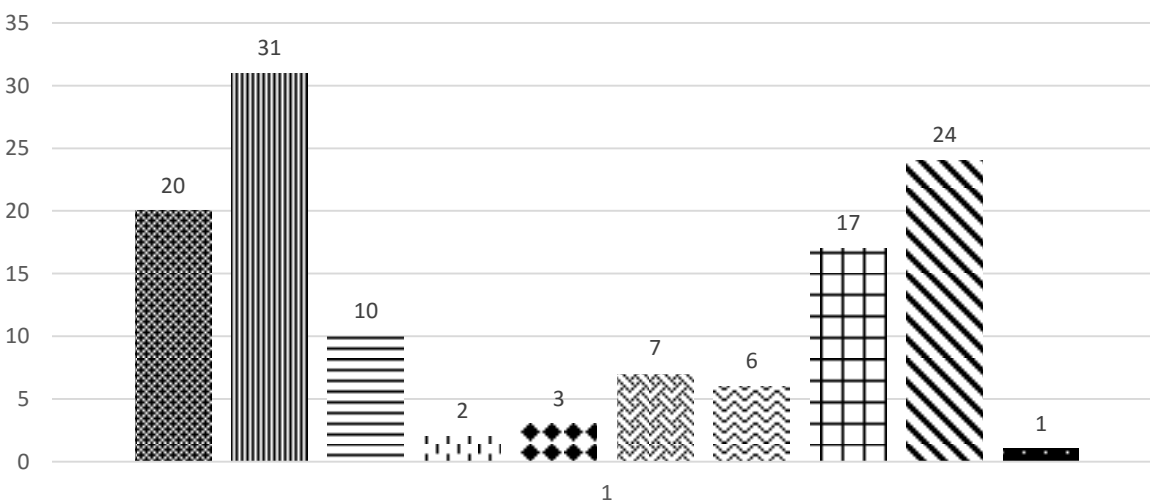
Volunteers at the Foundation are screened and assessed before their induction and are given a Code of Practice to guide them in their work. Throughout 2015 there were a total of 121 active volunteers involved in one or more spheres of service provision. The highest number were Tutors working within the Family Learning Support Service that comprises the children's learning support, non-formal education for parents and Mentoring. Of the 121 volunteers, 27 (23%) discontinued their involvement in 2015 for a number of personal reasons.

Below is statistical data about volunteering at the Foundation during 2015. Not included in the statistical data are students on a practice placement with the Foundation.

Volunteers' age categories - 2015



Volunteers by service deployment - 2015



Reception 20

Befriending 10

Social Support 3

SOAR 6

Admin Support 24

Learning Support 31

Handyman 2

Governing Board 7

Irene Service 17

Overseas Development 1



# Anti-Poverty Assistance in Developing Countries

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## *supporting poverty alleviation initiatives beyond our shores*

The Overseas Development Assistance, or ODA, unit of the Foundation obtains Malta Government funds for anti-poverty projects of our overseas partners in developing countries. After the project starts, the ODA team liaises with overseas partners from these countries to ensure that they have no difficulties with the required quarterly reports. These include detailed financial accounts, progress reports, and photographs of the activities. So far, the Foundation has obtained such funding for a clinic in Pakistan; women's small enterprises in South Sudan; infrastructure development and educational resource procurement at a women's vocational centre in the Central African Republic; the creation of a remote rural Health clinic in northern Malawi; and a home in the Peru rainforest area for destitute elderly women.

The unit is run by a volunteer project officer, and the services of the SJAF administrator. In 2015, the Foundation obtained funding for two new projects for beds for AIDS patients in Peru; and a women's farming and production in Malawi.

All project funding to date has been obtained from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Malta.



## *writing for empowerment*

The website of the Foundation was overhauled and a new one created in the summer of 2015. The new URL is [www.antidemalta.org](http://www.antidemalta.org).

### **For adults:**

*SJAF Magazine*: a monthly e-zine recording the work of the Foundation and providing articles on specialised topics. Accessible from: <http://www.antidemalta.org>

*Bdoti fil-Maltemp – kif tieġu ħsieb qarib b'mard mentali*. 144 pages. Jointly produced with the Mental Health Association, Malta, 2015. Editors: Nora Macelli and Connie Magro. 144 pages. ISBN number: 978-99957-0-677-7. Cover illustration by Marisa Attard. Published with funding from STRINA of the Malta Community Chest Fund.

*Il-Kwiekeb fid-Dlam Jixegħlu: vjaġġi ta' tama mterrqa minn qrafa ta' persuni b'mard mentali*. Jointly produced with the Mental Health Association, Malta, 2011. 146 pages. Editors: Connie Magro and Nora Macelli. ISBN number: 978-99932-0-965-2. Illustrations by Tony Macelli. Published with funding from STRINA of the Malta Community Chest Fund.

*Stars Shine Brightly in the Dark: journeys of hope of relatives of mentally ill persons*. Jointly produced with the Mental Health Association. E-book format, 2013. Editors: Nora Macelli and Connie Magro. 78 pages. ISBN number: 978-99957-0-455-1. Illustrations by Tony Macelli. Accessible from: [http://www.antidemalta.org/uploads/5/7/2/6/57264959/ebook\\_stars\\_shine\\_brightly\\_in\\_the\\_dark\\_englishillustfinal\\_\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.antidemalta.org/uploads/5/7/2/6/57264959/ebook_stars_shine_brightly_in_the_dark_englishillustfinal__1_.pdf)

*Annual Reports, 2008 to 2015* – accessible from: <http://www.antidemalta.org>

### **For children:**

*Il-Mela Darba tiegħi - ġrajjet veri tagħna t-tfal*. Editor: Ruth Stafrace. 2015. ISBN number: 978-99957-0-820-7. Illustrated by the child authors and Marisa Attard. Published with funding from the President's Award for Creativity.

*Caterpillar in a Jar* by Elaine Compagno. 2015. ISBN number: 978-99957-0-821-4. Illustrated by Marisa Attard. Published with funding from the President's Award for Creativity.

### **Publications in which SJAF contributed articles:**

*Helping Hands Magazine*, Issue number 51, December 2012. 12 pages of articles about the services of the Foundation.

*Helping Hands Magazine*, Issue number 70, October 2015. 10 pages full of articles about domestic violence.



## Foundation Prayer

Thank you, O Lord, for our beautiful world, which is yours. Let us, O Lord, be skilled enough and free enough and loving enough to work well with our sisters and brothers. And to help those who are left out of our world, or tired in spirit or broken from oppression or sickness or shame.

Let us be able to help them recognise and tap strength of spirit in their own lives. Let us be able to help them to value self and others and take their rightful place in society in dignity, in joy, in forgiveness, and in loving service.

They are yours, they are You.

*We offer them.*



In peace and in laughter, in trouble and in tears, thank you O Lord, for the fellowship that is manifested among us all in this work.

This fellowship is yours, this is You. *We offer this.*



Thank you for the beauty that shines through colleague and survivor and outcast and sorrowing one.

This beauty is yours, this is You.

*We offer this, for your glory is man fully alive.*



Thank you for what we do, and may this be your doing.

*We offer you what we are,* for it is your breath that is our essence and our life.

*This is our offering, O Lord,*

*This is our offering.*



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