

BOOSTING SELF-RELIANCE

IN VULNERABLE FAMILIES



ANNUAL REPORT

ST JEANNE ANTIDE FOUNDATION

2021

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Networks membership:

- Anti-Poverty Forum (APF);
- CARITAS Malta Parish Diaconia Network of community agencies and the wider network of parish pastoral work volunteer teams and community support agencies across Malta;
- Malta Health Network;
- Diocesan Diaconia Secretariat - Forum of faith-based organisations;
- Aġenzija Żgħażaġh;
- Network of service providers in area of domestic violence;
- WAVE (Forum Network);
- Platform Against Homelessness;
- Platform of Human Rights Organisations in Malta (PHRO);
- SKOP (Solidarjetà u Koperazzjoni) – an NGDO Forum;
- UNHCR network of agencies active in the migration field – Integration Roundtable.

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THE ST JEANNE ANTIDE FOUNDATION (SJAF) IN 2021

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 of St Jeanne Antide Thouret. Its mission 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, resilience and fulfilment of their potential. It does this by providing a range of professional and volunteer support services to very vulnerable individuals and families who are suffering due to very difficult life circumstances and those who are sliding into poverty and are socially excluded. Workers and volunteers at the Foundation work in partnership systematically in teams for the support and self-empowerment of socially excluded persons, families, and minority groups.

The Foundation has always followed a non-discrimination policy towards service users. It celebrates the beliefs, religious identity, and dignity of persons who belong to any religious or spiritual tradition (or none) – all are loved and respected. Thus, we see, welcome, and celebrate the infinite value of any human being, just as they are. We guarantee that anyone intending to make use of any of the Foundation's services will be made to feel comfortable, whoever they may be.

SJAF 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) and as a Foundation with the Registry for Legal Persons (LPF-101).

URL: www.antidemalta.org

Facebook: [Fondazzjoni St Jeanne Antide](https://www.facebook.com/Fondazzjoni-St-Jeanne-Antide)

Governance

A Governing Board is responsible for the oversight of strategic planning, policy development and financial management. Board members come from such diverse backgrounds as social work and nursing, financial management, social care service planning and management, medicine, and overseas development work. The CEO is a non-voting member of the Governing Board that meets monthly. www.antidemalta.org/governing-board/html

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 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 several core services. Operating from two community-based service sites, SJAF has naturally evolved into an organisation that is at the service of neighbouring communities. Its scope is both local, and national. During 2021, the Foundation ran the following services:

Family Support Service Centre (Scope: community based). Ċentru Antida is the Foundation's main family services hub. It lies in the heart of Hal Tarxien. Support services at Ċentru Antida during 2021 included the following:

..Social Work: family supports provided included assessment of needs, care planning, home-visits, advocacy, referral, accompaniment, information giving, emotional support, groupwork and in-kind support. Generic social work support was undertaken mainly in the catchment areas of Hal Tarxien, Paola, Fgura, Haż-Żabbar and Birżebbuġa. The service was also extended to service-using families that were making use of other SJAF services that are national in scope such as the LWIEN Service.

..Volunteering opportunities such as mentoring, reception work, handymen work, crafts production and admin support.

.. Charity Shop in Tarxien functions as a fundraising mechanism and a means to provide in-kind support to families facing financial hardship. It opened every Monday and Wednesday from 9 am to noon except for the months during which it had to be shut down due to a spike in number of COVID-19 pandemic cases.

The SOAR Service (Scope: national): advocacy and support by survivors for survivors of domestic violence who are rebuilding their lives and moving towards self-reliance and resilience. The Foundation's Social Workers co-work with the SOAR Service team to support self-referred and referred women and their children.

The LWIEN Service (Scope: national): offers professional guidance and non-formal education for family caregivers of persons with severe mental health problems. The service includes family consultations by a senior Mental Health Nurse, social work, and support literature in Maltese.

The Community Social Work Service of the Foundation cuts across all the above services. In the main, workers operate at community level and have a generic practice. (Scope: mainly community-based)

Ethos

Personnel maintain a friendly, humour-filled atmosphere in relating to each other - this is detected and appreciated by visitors and service users. The personal values, compassion and respect for others 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 at SJAF, and on the humane and personal approach in the different fields of practice. The economic, psychological, emotional and social freedom and self-acceptance found by distressed or vulnerable persons 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 loving-kindness and compassion.

Human Resources

In 2021, 19 employees were engaged with SJAF, 7 of whom on a full-time basis, 4 on reduced hours basis and 8 on part-time basis. Apart from these, 44 Volunteers were engaged in service provision across the different SJAF services and initiatives. The staff and volunteer complement comprised the following:

- 19 remunerated personnel - of these: 5 social workers, 2 Peer Mentors, 1 mental health nurse, a service coordinator of SOAR, a Family Services Centre manager and a manager for finance and administration.

- 44 Volunteers, one of whom led the Emotional Freedom Service on a voluntary basis; 2 co-managed the SJAF bazaar.
- 4 professionals who provided occasional professional services on a pro bono basis.

Volunteering hours of 44 volunteers in 2021 totalled 7,587 – equivalent to equivalent to practically 4 full-time workers. Were the hours of service of volunteers to be remunerated, their service would have cost the Foundation a minimum of €40,095. Their service contribution is invaluable and valued. Volunteers are considered as partner colleagues of the SJAF professionals.

Official Visits

Particularly memorable were the following official visits during 2021:

- 18th January - visit by Dr Lydia Abela, First Lady: apart from discussing SJAF approaches to supporting vulnerable persons in distress, SJAF highlighted the systemic obstacles still faced by victims and survivors of domestic violence and the urgent need for research into the link between suicide and suicide attempts by women and domestic violence.
- 22nd January – visit by Clyde Caruana, Minister for Finance; Clifton Grima, Parliamentary Secretary for Sports and Voluntary Organisations; and Mauro Parascandolo, on the 22nd January: during the visit, Minister Caruana announced the extension of government’s financial aid package for voluntary organisations to help save jobs within the sector. Through the first phase of the state aid scheme, 140 voluntary organisations benefited and 937 jobs were saved.
- 26th December – visit by Prof. Andrew Azzopardi, Dean of the Faculty for Wellbeing at the University of Malta during which we discussed a number of systemic issues including those related to access to services by family caregivers of mentally ill persons and the plight of victims and survivors of domestic violence.



Thanks to a grant from Melita Ltd, SJAF managed to install a fire detection system at Ćentru Antida Family Services Hub.

Advocacy

Advocacy is a major pillar of SJAF. Among the advocacy initiatives undertaken during the year were the following:

January	Highlighted to policy makers the need for a research study on the link between domestic violence and suicide.
March	Submissions to the Director General for Research, Policy and Operations on access to certain welfare benefits by family caregivers.
March	Submission of a 5-page memo to the Commissioner for Voluntary organisations highlighting the anomalies contained in the two new legal notices on Public Collections and Charity Shops. Following intense advocacy by NGOs, they were repealed and new ones formulated following stakeholder consultations.
April	Highlighted the issue of elder abuse at a dialogue meeting with the Commissioner for Older Persons, Dr Mary Vella and her team.
April	SJAF submitted a 5-page memo to the Commissioner for Voluntary organisations highlighting the anomalies contained in the two new legal notices on Public Collections and Charity Shops. Following intense advocacy by NGOs, they were repealed and new ones formulated following stakeholder consultations.
April	Signatory to Press Statement by the Anti Poverty Forum Malta (APF) about the legal notices on Charity Shops and Public Collections about which no prior consultations had been held. Both legal notices were putting undue pressure to the already heavy burden shouldered by philanthropic NGOs.
May	Collaborated with other voluntary organisations to present a set of recommendations for a Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) for VOs in Malta in order to make a clear case for the Voluntary Sector as part of a wider economic and community recovery, in partnership with central government, local authorities, public entities and corporate bodies. Such a plan would encourage financial investment in, and support for, Voluntary Organisations to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and sustain their service provision operations.
July	The SOAR Coordinator was a panelist invited to highlight challenges faced by survivors of domestic violence during a national stakeholder consultation on Violence, Abuse and Exploitation. The consultation was one in a wider programme titled: A Social Vision for Malta 2035 : Shaping the Future of Our Society led by the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights (MSFC). MSFC is developing a holistic vision for the Social Sector which will act as an over-arching framework delineating the requirements in the field of social policy in the medium- to long- term. The eventual Social Vision document will outline key sectors which need to be addressed through appropriate policy development with a view to enable Government to better address the challenges the Maltese society will face in the future.
July	Dialogue with the Occupational Therapy Community Services team at Mental Health Services Malta about the training needs of family caregivers of mentally ill persons.
July	Submission of 10 points regarding social housing and homelessness to the Platform Against Homelessness for discussion with policy makers.
August	Signed petition by a number of organisations on the plight of prisoners.

November

Submission of 8 recommendations for inclusion in a policy paper to be submitted by the Malta Health Network (MHN) to the health authorities.

November

Publication on social media of 16 posters by SOAR Service as part of the 16 days of activism. The posters presented testimonies by survivors of domestic violence.

November

14 posters published on social media ahead of the World Day of the Poor initiated by Pope Francis, celebrated on the 14th of November. Each poster had an extract from the message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 5th World Day of the Poor with short reflections from staff practice.



Mill-messaġġ tal-Papa
Frangisku għall-5 Jum Dinji tal-
Fqar u x'qanqal fina dan il-
messaġġ:

"Il-fqar issibuhom dejjem
magħkom" (Mk 14,7). Gešù
qal dawn il-kelmiet waqt
ikla, f'Betanja, fid-dar ta'
ċertu Xmun..."

*Għalina li nàrdnu, mill-qrib mal-fqara, Ġesù
jgħakkarna b'x nisklu bil-għes waqt li niftakru f' tnutna
b'nuqqas ta' mezzi għal ttiġijiet bażiċi ta' ttajjithom.*

December

Recommendation to the ĠEMMA initiative of the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights explore the possibility for the setting up of a Money Advice and Budgeting Service for over-indebted vulnerable citizens who, due to difficult life circumstances have insufficient income to meet basic needs.

Assistance to External Researchers

During the year, SJAF accepted to assist external researchers in their studies on such themes as the social environment and mental health, NGO management, nature of services provided by women's organisations, migration advocacy, and religion and spirituality and social work.

Y-Assist Service

Since September 2017, this service was conducted in close collaboration with, and at the request of, the Malta Trust Foundation (previously known as The President's Trust). It was managed by a bilateral inter-agency committee. Y-Assist was envisaged as a short-term supported accommodation programme for homeless mothers lacking family support and accommodation but who were committed to shaping a better future for themselves and their children. The service has accommodated thirteen families - 13 women, 2 of whom were pregnant at the time, and 13 children. All were admitted for an agreed term during which they were assisted to move ahead with their personal plan.

The cases of families involved in this programme turned out to demand high support from SJAF personnel, whose numbers had been necessarily limited. The last 3 women and their children in this programme were assisted to transition to independent living in 2021. Upon the expiry of the last applicable inter-agency contracts and service-user contracts, SJAF Governing Board returned full responsibility for the programme to the Malta Trust Foundation.

Acknowledgement to donors

The Foundation acknowledges the significant contribution, during 2021, of the following donors:

- The Malta Delegation of the Sisters of Charity of St Jeanne Antide which contributes the use of four service sites and the salary of the CEO.
- The Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity for its financial backing of the Community Social Work Service at Centru Antida and the SOAR Service.
- Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS)
- Rigal B'Imhabba campaign organised at Christmas time by the Office of the Prime Minister
- The Alfred Mizzi Foundation for their highly valued significant financial contribution towards key SJAF services across the years.
- APS Bank.
- Development Planning Fund - Planning Authority;
- Reġjun Xlokk;
- Melita Foundation
- Il-Ven.da Konfraternità tal-B.V. Marija tal-Karità, il-Belt Valletta
- VSF Malta Foundation
- MPS Ltd
- Gasan Group
- Salvo Grima Foundation
- Joseph Hili & Sons
- Women for Women Foundation
- Andrew Galea & Associates for the pro bono annual financial audit.
- St Peter Foundation for its sustained in-kind support for vulnerable families.
- Aġenzija Żgħażaġh
- Jobsplus
- Deloitte
- Wilhelmsen Lines Malta Ltd.
- The Claris Foundation
- Lions Club Sliema
- Focolare Movement
- Trelleborg Sealing Solutions Malta
- SOS Malta
- Helping Hands Magazine
- Family Sammut
- GO plc
- Tamara Webb
- Horizons book publisher
- SAS Azzjoni Kattolika
- Blevin Franks Charitable Foundation
- KPMG
- Zampa Debattista

- HSBC
- Djakonia Parroċċi Unit, Caritas Malta
- We Give Joy
- Happy Initiative
- Francis Busttil & Sons
- Juanfil
- A.M. Mangion Group
- Lovin' Malta – Lovin' Milied Campaign.

Gratitude is expressed to countless other benefactors, schools, company workers, families and other members of the general public who contributed donations and in-kind items needed by vulnerable families supported by the St Jeanne Antide Foundation. Unless otherwise requested, we remain committed to acknowledging monetary and in-kind donations via our facebook page:

Fondazzjoni St Jeanne Antide

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.

Audit reports for the previous years were submitted to the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations and to donors. Similarly, the narrative Annual Reports which are published and made available to donors and the public on the SJAF website:

<http://www.antidemalta.org/annual-reports.html>

stay humble
WORK HARD
be kind

COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORK SERVICE AT ĆENTRU ANTIDA FAMILY SERVICES HUB

719 family members from 315 vulnerable families in distress were supported in 2021

AIMS of the service

To identify and support hard-to-reach socially excluded families and those at risk of poverty;

- To dialogue with and build a genuine, supportive and loving-kind rapport with identified vulnerable, socially excluded and poor families;
- To engage such families in a relationship that enables them to explore different solutions to their pressing problems and life challenges;
- To carry out holistic family-support interventions through access to a range of supports available in-house as well as those provided by other organisations;
- To develop a trans-disciplinary, community-based practice involving practitioners from diverse fields of practice – social work, counselling, mental health, non-formal education, youth work, training and employment, complimentary therapies, entrepreneurship and the expressive arts;
- To enable vulnerable families to build bridges with enabling parish structures and support organisations across sectors: social welfare, education, health, mental health, employment, entrepreneurship;
- To advocate on their behalf when the situation so requires and to submit policy recommendations to policy makers;
- To learn from community social work practice so as to share insights about what works with other practitioners from state and non-state organisations;
- To refer individuals and families to other service providers as and when required to maximise well-being outcomes and to minimise duplication;
- To always ensure the safety and protection of children and adults deemed vulnerable and to always act in their best interests.

The pandemic changed not only the way that social work is practised by family support service-providers like SJAF, but also the way vulnerable service users access support services and grapple with coping and adjusting to this new reality – a reality which is often characterised by fear and anxiety, mental ill health and financial difficulties and related burdens. From a management perspective, these changes meant that policies and procedures needed to be reviewed and adjusted and new ones created. Collaboration with other organisations and corporate partners also needed to be intensified to maximise beneficial outcomes for SJAF service users. During 2021, SJAF worked continuously on multiple levels to support communities of similarly-afflicted individuals and families who were especially fearful of, and affected by, Covid-19. The support offered by the Community Social Work team focused on channelling the energy taken up by fear, anxiety and distress into cultivating a sense of hope and readiness to become more self-determined and self-reliant. The SJAF Community Social Work Service team continued to operate through the SJAF Ćentru Antida Family Services Hub. Apart from welcoming and supporting persons and families in difficulty from the localities of Hal Tarxien, Paola, Fgura, Birżebbuġa and Santa Luċija, the team continued to work closely with other SJAF practitioners running the SOAR and LWIEN Services. The team additionally responded to calls for help from families from other localities and worked closely with other agencies to enable such families to access services closer to their community of residence.

Outreach work

From the outset, SJAF developed an effective community outreach approach to social work that serves well those persons and families having tenuous links to mainstream services. This approach has enabled SJAF practitioners to stay grounded and to better identify and understand barriers-to-accessing-support. As with community work practitioners from other countries, the St Jeanne Antide Foundation in Malta has experimented with three different types of outreach work:

- Domiciliary outreach involving visits to the homes of vulnerable individuals and families; this is what social workers are highly trained to do – home-visits;
- Detached outreach in identified neighbourhoods in a number of localities. Households are contacted individually and streets covered systematically; and

- Peripatetic outreach targeting populations rather than individuals. Peripatetic outreach involves making contacts and presentations in different places with practitioners, with community groups, and in locations where certain groups tend to congregate.

Outreach allows SJAF personnel to meet potential service users in an environment which is closer to where they currently reside. This allows the support workers to carry out a more extensive assessment of families' ongoing needs, abilities and potential for self-determined problem-solving and decision-taking. Typical outreach service users, identified through three types of outreach work during the years, included the following: individuals who feel isolated in their own homes, disaffected youths in certain zones, families living in depressed areas, homeless individuals, highly anxious and distressed family caregivers and hidden siblings of mentally ill persons, parents of children with a disability, victims and survivors of domestic violence, and parents whose children are grappling with literacy skills.

One should emphasize the great benefits of mental health outreach which often manages to help the families of hidden and isolated mentally ill persons who resist accessing psychiatric assessment and treatment to become prepared to doing so. Such holistic outreach in the field of mental health involving whole families facilitates knowledge and understanding of mental health, combats stereotypes and stigmas, and contributes to capacity building of those who provide primary caregiving. One other advantage of outreach programmes is that they allow for services that are open-ended so as to effectively meet the needs of vulnerable persons.

Regretfully due to the COVID-19 pandemic, satellite outreach work at different sites in catchment localities had to be halted due to the risks involved. A satellite type of service delivery is where services are delivered at different sites, away from the main base of the service provider. In order to counterbalance obstacles to outreach generated by the pandemic, the SJAF team of social workers wholeheartedly formed part of an important community-of-interest – that of Church-based community agencies and the wider Diaconia Parishes Network comprising parish-based pastoral work volunteers who support families in distress. Agencies forming part of this community-of-interest operated virtually; members connected regularly via the internet and various messaging tools and held discussions, exchanged information, ideas and plans, and took part in monthly online meetings

of the wider parishes diaconia network which is coordinated by the Parish Diaconia Unit at Caritas Malta.

The SJAF Community Social Work team predominantly runs a generic service while dedicating time to serve families being supported by the specialised in-house services such as LWIEN (mental health) and SOAR (female victims and survivors of domestic violence). The team of social work practitioners met every week to discuss casework, revisit policies, procedures and practices, access team building and mentoring support, share developments, dialogue with invited guests, discuss outcomes of representation in different national fora and networks and plan collaborative work initiatives. Practitioners identified areas for continuing personal and professional development on the basis of which CPD opportunities were accessed with input from both external resource persons and Foundation staff.

In terms of the generic social work practice, the team offered a range of supports to families from the localities of Hal Tarxien, Paola, Fgura, Birżebbuġa and Santa Luċija. Referred and self-referred families could access a range of supports depending on identified needs during the care planning stage. In doing so, the team worked closely with practitioners and officials from other agencies across sectors – education, health, mental health, housing, banks, and other national service providers such as the Water and Energy Agency. Some of the key supports extended to vulnerable families included the following:

- Advocacy and mediation;
- Access to learning support opportunities; close liaison with mainstream formal and non-formal educational institutions;
- Access to in-kind support such as food aid and hygiene bank packages, clothing, school uniforms and educational resources, baby items, household goods, furnishings, second-hand laptops;
- Access to a supportive Volunteer Befriender or a Volunteer Mentor,
- Help with finding a job and assistance to access services offered by other agencies at local, regional and national levels.

In certain cases of over-indebtedness, the team was able to offer a measure of debt relief to alleviate anxiety, distress and inability to meet the family's basic needs due to limited income. This was done because the community social work team saw an increase in over-indebted families whose income was lower than the amount needed for them to meet basic needs.

During 2021, at any particular time, the team consisted of four Social Workers who, between them, worked with a total of 315 families.

New cases:	101 (28% referred by state agencies)
Family members:	719
Older families who continued to access support in 2021:	214
Closed cases (of 315):	166 (53%)
Cases still open in December:	149

Team members benefited from regular professional supervision. Performance appraisals were undertaken. Two (2) first year Social Work students completed their 75-hour engagement placement at the Foundation and moved on to become volunteers with a new Youth Group initiative started in late 2021.

Weekly team meetings were held, sometimes with input of an external Mentor. The team ably reviewed existing standard operating procedures and created needed ones.

Also in 2021, a new Case-Management Software was acquired and the team worked hard to familiarise itself with its use.

Advocacy on the need for a centrally-based Money Advice Centre for over-indebted persons



SJAF FACEBOOK POST

– 1st September 2021

FEJN TISTA' TMUR JEKK INT M'GHANDEKX BIŻŻEJJED DHUL BIEX TKAMPA?

Sfortunatament, ghal min qed isibha diffiċli biex ihallas il-kontijiet tad-dawl u l-ilma, telefon u kirja – ghax id-dhul tieghu ma jwassalx mal-htigijiet kollha tal-familja - Malta mhawnx Ċentri li wiehed jista' jzur biex jikseb parir dwar flusu u kif jaghmel baġit li jwassal aktar. Fl-Irlanda hemm il-MONEY ADVICE AND BUDGETING SERVICE CENTRES (ara per eżempju <https://mabs.ie>). Dawn iċ-Ċentri joffru numru ta' servizzi ta' pariri u għajnuna dwar kif taghmel biex ikollok stampa ċara tal-finanzi tiegħek, l-immaniġġjar aħjar tal-flus, kif tibni baġit, x'tista' taghmel dwar l-arretrati ta' hlas tas-self fuq id-dar, u pariri dwar djun ohra. Ċentri bħal dawn jifthu mid-9 ta' filghodu sat-8 ta' filghaxija u jkunu f'lokal ċentrali.

Ċentru Antida Family Services Hub

Ċentru Antida is the base of community social work operations. At the centre, safeguarding the wellbeing of all stakeholders remained a key operational function especially during the time when COVID-19 numbers spiked dramatically. Swift solutions had to be found whenever volunteers made the difficult decision to temporarily halt their volunteering service due to either being covid-vulnerable or positive themselves of had relatives who were. Despite these challenges, the roster of Volunteer Reception workers was maintained.

Centre management ably followed-up facebook messages and alerted social work staff regarding incoming appeals for help. Orders for in-kind support items were regularly made. Three volunteers worked hard to prepare regular aid packages for SJAF service users. They sorted, packaged and labeled aid packages containing food items, detergents, toiletries, and nappies. Each month, the volunteers were responsible for stock-taking to guide centre management on any required appeals and procurement of new stock.

Ċentru Antida management succeeded in providing the wide range of in-kind supports listed above based on incoming requests by SJAF family support practitioners. Additionally, the pick-up and delivery of items donated by the general public was coordinated. Management also took part in regular online staff meetings and senior management planning and review ones. Most importantly, active participation in the monthly online meetings of the Parish Djakonija Network of pastoral work volunteers across Maltese parishes to keep alive SJAF participation in this network and to further develop collaborative work.

Groupwork at Ċentru Antida

Groups that continued to meet included the following:

- Self-Esteem group;
- Book Club;
- Handicrafts production group;
- SOAR Saturday Club;
- SOAR youth group.



Fondazzjoni St Jeanne Antide
Published by Nora Macelli · 16 July 2021 · 🌐

IL-WhatsApp GHANDU UZU QAWWI FIL-QASAM TAS-SOLIDARJETÀ SOĊJALI. Dawk fostna li nwieżnu t-toqol imgarab minn tant familji li jeħtiegu l-ghajnuna tagħna sibna modi oħra kif nindukraw u nagħtu kas għajna fid-diffikultà. IL-COVID-19 sfurzta nkonu aktar kreattivi. Per eżempju, FTIT SEKONDI KULJUM u ntaffu s-solitudni u l-qutgh il-qalb ta' dak li jkun billi, bil-WhatsApp, nibgħatu MESSAGĠI TA' KURAGĠ u POSTER ILLUSTRAT BI KLIEM LI JWENNES u jispira.

PER EŻEMPJU, jekk persuna thobb tkabbar xtieli, nibgħatlu ritratt ta' x'qed inkabbru u hi tibgħatliha tagħha. Jew nista'qsu dak li jkun kif inhi u nfakkruha li qed nitolbu għaliha. Jew nibgħatu messagg biex naraw kif marru fis-seduta l-Qorti. Messaggi li, għalkemm jieħdulna ftit sekondi, jwennsu bil-kbir lil dak li jkun għax iħossu fiz-zgur li xi hadd tassew jimpurta ruhu minnu.

Ftit mit-twegibiet:
 "Il-messaggi tiegħek jiswew mitqulu deheb. Napprezzahom. Grazi."
 "Kemmi tifhimni!"
 "Miegħek naqşam ferh u dwejjaq izda nipprova nkon pożittiva. Int habiba ta' vera u miegħek naqşam kollox, mhux id-dwejjaq biss."
 "Persuna tajba int. Minn barra u minn gewwa."
 "Grazi ta' kull ma tagħmel miegħi u l-familja."

Fondazzjoni St Jeanne Antide
Published by Melanie Piscopo · 11 March 2021 · 🌐

We thank the Parliamentary Secretary for Sports, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations for the 2021 grant for our NGO's project titled: The Challenge of COVID-19 - creating collaborative new pathways to community outreach. The project falls under the Voluntary Organisations Projects Scheme or VOPS which is managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS). Looking forward to the process of implementing the project! #VOPS #MCVS

Malta Council for the VOLUNTARY SECTOR
 PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR SPORTS, RECREATION AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS
 VOPS
 Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme

SOAR SERVICE

peer mentoring and support by survivors of domestic violence

SOAR HIGHLIGHTS 2021

113 women supported; 14 of these were new cases of victims fearful of asking support from the Police or other agencies. These women were intensely supported from the outset to nurture a readiness to access support from state agencies. Of the 113 women supported, over 32 were high support cases.

83 different group activities (online and not) were organized and led by SOAR throughout the year. These included: 22 non-formal educational sessions; 15 Wellbeing and self-care activities; 23 Fellowship activities; 25 MERAKI Social Enterprise production practice sessions.

1,510 hours of individual Peer Mentoring extended to the 113 women;

1,484 hours of group-based peer support provided including web-based sessions and dialogue via a secure SOAR social media platform.

Two SOAR Facebook pages were maintained to keep in touch with survivors. 16 Posters were designed and uploaded on SOAR's Facebook page during the November to December 16 days of activism (each poster had a quote from a survivor).

Of the 113 survivors supported, 53 benefited from much-needed food aid, hygiene bank items, clothing for themselves and their children and emergency debt relief to ward off debilitating financial crises. These were women who felt very isolated and alone with their children and feeling lost because of the COVID-19 restrictions.

SOAR has produced two non-formal educational tools being used by SOAR Peer Mentors: (a) a Budgeting tool which survivors are trained to use to effectively manage their limited income and reduce over-indebtedness caused by accumulating unpaid bills, and (b) an explanatory tool about Water & Electricity Bills.

In late 2021, the St Jeanne Antide Foundation set up a SOAR Youth Group which started connecting to plan a youth-focused and public awareness raising initiative to combat misogynistic mindsets pervasive in our society.

The SOAR Service Coordinator regularly participated in the Inter-ministerial Committee on Gender-based Violence and Domestic violence.

SOAR is run by experienced and trained female survivors of domestic violence who provide personalised Peer Support and Mentoring to other female survivors combined with a range of other supports. Since its launch in 2012, SOAR has provided Peer Mentoring and support to 310 survivors of domestic violence.

PEER MENTORING AND SUPPORT

In 2021, the team of 4 SOAR Peer Mentors, between them, supported and regularly followed-up 113 survivors, 32 of whom required high support. Regular telephone calls, office-based visits, online meetings and group activities keep the connection alive. In order to maximise wellbeing outcomes for the women supported, SOAR Peer Mentors collaborated with the women's social workers and support practitioners from other agencies through case reviews. One-to-one Peer Mentoring sessions in 2021 totaled 1,510 hours whereas group-based ones totaled 1,484 hours.

Motivating and empowering survivors of domestic violence involves constant support and guidance to enable them to take control of their lives. Each woman is at a different stage of rebuilding her life. One commonality is that they all need to learn to be kind to themselves by learning about self-compassion. Some women who lived with an abusive partner often find it very difficult to make simple choices about their life as they either lacked such space and opportunity or were punished when they tried.

Enabling survivors to become self-empowered involves learning to make wise and judicious decisions in different areas of their lives. Encouraging survivors to celebrate small achievements is a key SOAR endeavor. Small decisions may include leaving the house on one's own without fear; paying a bill online; exploring further studies; accessing therapy; meeting a friend for a coffee without looking over one's shoulders in fear; and managing their finances.



SOAR Peer Mentors complemented the support work of practitioners from other agencies in the following ways:

- Motivating survivors to keep to the agreed plan so as to move forward in life with renewed hope and determination;
- Fortify survivors' determination to stay away from the very abusive relationship despite the pull to go back because a pervasive sense of hopelessness (reasons vary from woman to woman);
- Accompanying survivors through their transitions. These include:
 - (a) planning in detail the steps involved in changing accommodation: packing belongings by category/ rooms, transport logistics, child minding while packing and unpacking and settling in; informing authorities on change of address;
 - (b) requesting the SJAF Ċentru Antida manager to solicit donations of furniture, furnishings, bedding and household items from benefactors;
 - (c) mediating with women's relatives since, very often, they are abusive and controlling and contrarian. This support limits potential disastrous intrusion by relatives;
 - (d) mobilising survivor members of SOAR who have settled down and wish to support other women in their transition between exiting a shelter, settling down, changing children's school, finding work, etc;
 - (e) guiding women to juggle the complex official procedures required to complete a referral to a new service such as admission to a shelter; informing Social Security and Bank about change of address; negotiating payments with landlords; applying for a Housing Authority scheme;
 - (f) supporting women to admit their children to a new school/ childcare/ afterschool programme/ skolasajf and finding educational resources through sponsors;
 - (g) when the need arises, assisting with access to external emergency interventions and assessments by an Educational Psychologist or Parent Coach;
 - (h) emotional support when a woman suffers a loss;

(i) matching them with a Volunteer Mentor and preparing them for this new person in their life who will guide and support them along their way.

Despite the fact that, for many, the steps described above may be taken for granted, the women supported by SOAR have lived fractured lives and relationships and struggle to find their way through the complexities of rebuilding their lives.

Volunteer Mentors

4 very active and committed Volunteer Mentors continued to offer their support. Unlike the SOAR Peer Mentors, these 4 are not survivors of domestic violence themselves. Rather, they are loving-kind friendly guides whose steady and constant support is a reassuring and constant element in survivors' lives. Volunteer Mentors are sometimes invited to share their views of the survivor's situation during case reviews. They highlight in a non-biased way the strengths and achievements of their Mentees.



Flexibility of SOAR Peer Mentors

One of the strengths of peer mentoring is that Peer Mentors are ready to work flexible hours, even late evenings and weekends. Many survivors work office hours and would miss out on much support had SOAR offered its services during normal working hours. Peer Mentors base their support according to the schedule of their Mentees. They connect with them through individual and group video calls, phone calls, office-based sessions and at safe public spaces.

When I have flashbacks, I suddenly remember that I have moved out from our house where he used to abuse me. But the abuse hasn't stopped. I am renting and he is still in the matrimonial house. I wish to give up and go back because I cannot cope financially. But the regular chats I have online with SOAR Mentors, even late at night, keep me aware of why I left and that I must stay strong. Even though it's not fair I had to move out, my life is no longer at risk. I wish the court can see what we are going through."

– a SOAR Survivor

Continuing Professional Development (CPDs)

In 2021, SOAR Peer Mentors benefited from 15 continuing professional development opportunities. They also led 2 in-house CPD for the SJAF Community Social Work team on SOAR Services and signs of abusive relationships and on the financial management tool created by a SOAR Peer Mentor which can be used by the Social Work team as well.

PROVISION OF IN-KIND SUPPORTS

During 2021, SJAF mobilized funds from its network of benefactors and donors to cover financial and in-kind support needs of a number of service users, including SOAR survivors. These included funds to pay rent when there is a risk of eviction; closure of a contract for a telephony service with one provider before moving to new accommodation which covers telephony by a different provider; nappies and hygiene products; food; shoes and clothing; educational supplies; transport costs for a move to a new accommodation; and snacks after long face-to-face meetings. Food packages were delivered, in some cases, weekly. Other in-kind supports provided included: laptops for studies; assistance with application for Scheme 9; back-to-school packages; and medicine. SJAF staff and Volunteers helped with pick-up of donated items, sorting, packing and with delivery. Peer Mentors also encourage a cost-saving clothes-swap system for members.



Of the 113 survivors supported during 2021, 53 benefited from the above-mentioned supports to ward off debilitating financial crises. These were women who felt very isolated and alone with their

children and feeling lost because of the COVID-19 restrictions.

GROUP-BASED ACTIVITIES

A range of small group sessions were held online as well as at the Foundation's Centru Antida Family Services hub. 83 different activities (online and not) were organized and led by SOAR throughout the year. These included: 22 non-formal educational sessions; 15 Wellbeing and self-care activities; 23 Fellowship activities; and 25 MERAKI Social Enterprise production practice sessions.

All the 83 activities were aimed at enabling women to further understand the complex and toxic nature of psychological and emotional abuse, in a safe space with others similarly afflicted. They also enable women to re-build self-confidence; speak coherently; reflect about one's life experiences and deriving insights to move forward resiliently; and plan to regain financial independence. Women also learn about boundaries and about the perils of plunging into a relationship because of loneliness and hope for intimacy and need for accommodation and financial support.

Non-formal educational sessions focused on public speaking and presentation skills, skills important for court hearings, why therapy is important for personal growth and development, how to find courses that fit one's interests; personal health; how to support others and introduce them to support services; parental alienation; financial management; and training on maintaining a 21-day personal journal on gratitude.

Full-day fellowship activities were also held outdoor in small groups. These included discussions; painting; enjoying nature; meditation; having fun with one's children; quality time for older SOAR members to reach out to new ones. These outdoor activities involved survivors who were isolated during the COVID-19 months and were seriously deprived of any leisure activities.

The noon to 6pm Saturday SOAR Club was re-started in 2021 following its closure during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic months. SOAR is a real lifeline for survivors and the Club re-inforces this. Members cook, produce MERAKI Soaps, lunch together, participate in an activity of their choice and, most importantly relate in a meaningful and fun manner. SOAR members eventually become volunteers. Some of these have also joined the Meraki initiative to produce SOAPS as wedding gifts for guests and as tokens during parties. Others help during events such as the Reverse Advent Calendar food aid initiative of SJAF, do reception work and assist with sorting and storage of donations.

Emphasis on self-care: 15 self-care activities were organized during the year. Our motto: “We cannot pour from an empty jar.” For many survivors, self-care is regarded as a frivolous notion – important but impossible for them in their situation. SOAR activities re-awaken one’s lost inner caregiver.

As a single parent who has been through a lot and have close to no support, this concept may be something impossible to achieve, exhausting or pointless to consider, mainly due to time and my financial situation. But, thanks to SOAR, I am here, and I am really feeling good. I will continue to practice these routines at home.” – a SOAR mother



One poignant outcome was the frequency of the question of how they could be trained to help someone going through what they have been through. For SOAR Peer Mentors, this signifies the readiness of a number of members to move on to access SOAR training in peer support.



I Like to see mommy smiling. It makes me happy.” – a young child survivor

When mentoring survivors with no support system, SOAR steps in to help each woman build a support system. Between September and December 2021, SOAR organised a number of birthday parties to help mothers provide beautiful memories to her

children. Through these activities, survivors realise how awful the impact of abuse has been and the toll it took.

The truth, however, is that SOAR has had hundreds of calls in the last three months of 2021 from women seeking support, feeling isolated, lonely and under immense pressure to parent, home school and keep their jobs so as to pay the bills.

My children call you ‘aunties’. You back me up when I fall. You know from experience that if I fall, my children fall with me. Thanks for the constant support.” – a young Soar mother



RISK MANAGEMENT AND SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

Even though SOAR is a service for women and child survivors of domestic violence, the SOAR team still finds itself in situations where members find themselves in new abusive situations causing risk or new cases of victims who reach out to SOAR for support because they are at a loss as to what steps to take to flee from an abusive relationship.

In 2021, SOAR Peer Mentors dealt with 32 cases needing high-support since their past partners escalated their harassment. SOAR swiftly mobilised interventions by other agencies to protect the women and their children.

Expressions of suicidal thoughts continued to be common among survivors of domestic violence since, despite all their efforts to disconnect from the toxic relationship, ex-partners never give up.

SOAR's constant support is a preventive and women regularly express relief at finding such an understanding, loving-kind and supportive family. Challenges are unavoidable but the fact that SOAR staff are present so intensely in their lives is an anchor for the survivors-in-crisis.

During the Christmas period, there was an increase in calls for support. Being at home alone with the children and lacking a social support network, anxiety, fear and tiredness exacerbate their situation. Late 2021, the SOAR team started a process of taking stock. One of the outcomes was the deployment of a new SJAF Social Worker to support the SOAR team especially in situations where victims contact SOAR and initially refuse to seek support from the official state channels because of intense fear, especially fear that going to the Police is a useless step which might further endanger their lives. At such a stage, Social Work intervention was being considered as crucial by the SOAR Team members. SJAF embarked on this professional support measure for SOAR through new fundraising approaches.

Following a meeting with Dr Lydia Abela in early 2021, where SJAF proposed the need for research into the link between suicide/ suicide ideation/ suicide plan and domestic violence, the Dean of the Faculty for the Wellbeing of Society at the University of Malta held a meeting with SOAR Coordinator and CEO to discuss the Faculty's plan for such a research project. SOAR will help in any way possible. Until December 2021, no funding has been found by the Faculty to undertake this much-needed research of such a hidden phenomenon. SOAR also accompanied a number of service users to the Police GBDV Hub and to Victim Support Agency (VSA) because of re-victimisation.



Fondazzjoni St Jeanne Antide
Published by Melanie Piscope · 31 August 2021 · ...

Good morning! Through our SOAR Service – aimed at providing a range of supports to survivors of domestic violence - we daily 'see' how a woman's capabilities are severely restricted because she is subjected to domestic violence. Women and children who experience domestic violence are at higher risk for low mood, anxiety, fear and feelings of hopelessness and helplessness associated with depression, than women and children who are not so horribly exposed.

All around us, there is a growing interest in MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING. Internationally renowned Indian economist and philosopher AMARTYA SEN has been instrumental in developing the CAPABILITY APPROACH - a set of capabilities that enable individuals to do and to be that which they have reasons to value. Sen has made significant contributions to welfare economics, social choice theory, economic and social justice, economic theories of famines, decision theory, development economics, public health, and measures of well-being of countries. According to Sen, the range of things which people value doing or being may vary from elementary ones (such as being adequately nourished and being free from avoidable disease) to very complex activities or personal states (such as being able to take part in the life of the community and having self-respect).

Political theorist MARTHA NUSSBAUM elaborated further the concept of capabilities across ten domains which include being able to have good health, being able to imagine, think, and reason, having freedom of emotional expression and practical reasoning to enable planning of one's life, affiliation with others in conditions that engender self-respect and non-discrimination, being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities, and having control over one's material environment. Being in a position to 'be' and 'do' things that have value contributes to mental health. [SOAR MALTA](#)

INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION

SOAR works in collaboration with the Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence (GBDV) Unit falling under the Vice-Squad of the Police, Community Police, the NGO Victim Support Malta, the state Victim Support Agency (VSA), Legal Aid Malta, the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) of Aġenzija Appogg of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) and social workers from other services within FSWS, the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, the Department of Gender and Sexualities within the Faculty for the Wellbeing of Social at the University of Malta, the Dean's Office of the Faculty for the Wellbeing of Society, and with other NGOs such as the Women for Women and Women's Rights' Foundation.

SOAR also participates in the regular meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence so as to better highlight survivors' perspectives of the systems created to support them and to make recommendations to policy makers present. SOAR contributed to the panel presentation during a public consultation on Violence, Abuse and Exploitation on July 9, 2021 organised by the Office of the Director General for Research and Social Policy at the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights.

In 2021, 3 SOAR members took part in Triple R trauma-informed 12-week evening course designed to empower survivors of domestic violence organised by Victim Support Malta. Two SOAR staff members completed the training and will be offering the same training to 25 SOAR survivors in early 2022. Following this, SOAR will continue to extend the training to more survivors.

Proud Moments 2021

Some of the proudest moments SOAR had in 2021 was that of having helped, in October 2021, four Survivors and a young male child of a survivor to invest in their educational journey to make a go of their plan to move ahead in life.



SOAR Peer Mentors are where they are because SOAR was there for them in the past. It was SOAR that encouraged them to access educational courses and training. SOAR Peer Mentors know first-hand the value of education especially when their hope is to look forward and shape a new life for themselves and their children with resilience and hope. The majority of the 113 survivors supported during 2021 expressed that their main need was to secure a job that would give them a regular income and financial security. Furthering their education, they realise, is crucial for this to become a reality. Although they are 'survivors', many continue to suffer invisible abuse and harassment which is insidious and meant to run them further to the ground.

Unfortunately, in 2021, 5 SOAR members had to make the sad decision to drop out of their university or MCAST course of studies because they could not continue studying while constantly struggling with the never-ending aftermath of domestic violence. Regrettably for many survivors, the systems are not working well for them. Lengthy court cases; incessant unnecessary filing of petitions (rikorsi) by the perpetrator; failure by perpetrator to pay maintenance; refusal to appear in court for mediation and for separation hearings; refusal to sign off on sale of matrimonial home; accumulating debts due to failure to meet bill payment deadlines; having to stay at home when school classes were online; inflexible supervised visit dates and time; and many other traumatic situations.

CASE: In one case, for example, the survivor dropped out of her studies as she was constrained to take her daughter for supervised access visits (SAVs) twice a week by bus. Each time, she had to catch four buses. Apart from that, their son has a condition and he needs physiotherapy once a week, taking four bus trips each time. In the meantime, the father is still fighting a court battle to (a) have child support reduced; and (b) be given UNSUPERVISED access to their son even though he was found guilty of exposing the same minor to physical abuse and neglect. Court sessions have already dragged four years. Finally, this January, justice was served. After much advocacy work by SOAR and support to the survivor so as to keep sane. Next year she again enrol to a full-time course!

You have been a lifeline to me! I was about to give up on my last year of studies. Your regular calls were what kept me motivated and truly helped me to overcome my fears which were holding me back. SOAR helped me find inner strength when I needed it most.” (source: a young graduate)

SOME COMMON REALITIES AND PLANS TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING THE INVISIBLE

Plans for 2022: SOAR plans regular weekly outreach with SOAR women who are isolated while combating the pandemic in silence. Such an approach proved to be a real life-saving lifeline in 2021, especially for those who suffer from a mental health difficulties; these were found to be slowly shutting off connection with the world around them.

In 2021, as highlighted above, SOAR supported a few women who could not extricate themselves from the clutches of the perpetrator. While doing so, SOAR used its experience and risk assessment skills to analyse women's risk and, when risk is not present, to continue supporting them in various ways, depending on each woman's situation and needs. In cases of high risk, SOAR guides the women to reconnect with state agencies.

CASE: SOAR has helped an older woman who was blocked from accessing medical treatment for cancer. We have since helped her move to a safe and supportive home elsewhere and will continue supporting her post surgery and recovery.

Raising a Family Alone

Long before Covid-19 restrictions were introduced, loneliness and isolation were a common experience for those parenting alone after domestic abuse - where fathers tend to abdicate their responsibilities but create this false social media persona to fight for their fatherhood rights. Living alone with children has meant that parents often feel isolated and in despair. For many, the stigma, obstacles, judgementalism and discrimination that single mothers face can force parents, often without realising it, to keep to themselves, working hard to get it right for their children so no one can point fingers at them. The stigma around single mothers on welfare benefits is still an unfortunate reality in Malta.

If we women, mothers, were to abdicate our motherhood and parenting responsibilities as so many fathers are doing, our government will have a serious problem with providing accommodation and care for neglected and abandoned children. We should be thankful and support single parents who are doing their utmost to dedicating their lives to care for their children - against all odds and the unfair abuse of the legal system by responsibility-shirking, abusive fathers. – SOAR Survivor

Managing one's life and family life single-handedly often leads to high levels of stress and anxiety. One's self-confidence, self-esteem and mental health often take a dive. Survivors start to find themselves more and more disconnected from the world around them. Accessing therapy for their children too becomes a nightmare as the abusive parent has to sign his consent. In all of this, it is no wonder that children of survivors of domestic violence and abuse start presenting oppositional and challenging behaviour. Oftentimes, survivors disclose that their body feels as if it is about to fail them. Many fall ill multiple times a year. For those in employment, this situation becomes a nightmare as they unsuccessfully try to grapple with keeping their job. About a third of children of survivors of domestic violence helped by SOAR have parents struggling with poor mental health. Poor mental health makes it harder for a parent to effectively manage their daily struggles. The constant pressure of parenting and handling everything alone is often too much some days.

Marika: With the help of the long-term support from SOAR I became determined to live to tell my story after many years of abuse and dependence on support services. I have regained my voice. Now i can safely say "No more!" even though it took me a very long time to do so. The SOAR community - their patience and love and understanding and respect - help me reinforce my purpose to move on in life, not to give up, and to sustain hope. I want to be able to be like my SOAR Mentors - strong to support others living the ugly trauma of domestic abuse and violence. After therapy and support by state services I asked myself - 'But what next? To whom can I turn to after office hours?' The ugly effects of trauma often resurface. I cannot forgive and forget and let go because I am still co-parenting with a Narcissist; he tries all the tricks and tactics possible to make my life a non-stop living hell. He loves being violent by proxy - using the children to hound me incessantly. But, to the world around him, he is charming, rational, caring, jovial..... No one believed me. Not even my own family. He managed to hoodwink everyone; even lawyers and judges. Who can I talk to when my own family members have no idea what it is like to live with a narcissist? My identity was stripped away. I felt a nobody. For many years, he showered me with insults, belittling me... until I came to believe him. Today, I have my SOAR friends to talk with. They keep me sane and grounded. Each morning, I wake up and think of them and their understanding and unfailing support."

DEVELOPMENTS

SOAR Service Hub renovation works initiative: During 2021, SJAF management worked hard to secure funding for this project.

Also in 2021, SOAR set up a youth group which will focus on awareness raising among youth on the signs of an abusive relationship and domestic violence and what support exists. The group launch will take place in early 2022.

FUNDING

In January 2021, the St Jeanne Antide Foundation started implementing a Public Social Partnership agreement with the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's rights for its SOAR Service for peer mentoring and support services to survivors of domestic violence.

Also in January 2021, the Voluntary Solidarity Fund Malta provided funding for 2 additional SOAR Peer Mentors working part-time to focus on entrepreneurship development training, creative self-expression activities and financial management. Other contributors to SOAR were, among others, the Association of International Women Malta that ran wellbeing workshops and fundraising activities for survivor support; social influencer Tamara Webb, GO and Women 4 Women Foundation.



CONCLUSION

What SOAR women wish: When domestic violence is proven in court and the perpetrator sentenced, the victim should NOT have to spend the rest of her assets, time, money, and life fighting to separate from her abuser. The criminal justice system and family court should work in tandem and be aware of the tactics adopted by perpetrators to misuse the legal system to continue abusing victim. Tactics include repeatedly not showing up for court hearings; not signing legal documents; bombarding the victim with false Police reports. Such tactics jeopardise a timely case resolution.

SJAF FACEBOOK HIGHLIGHTS ON SOAR



LWIEN SERVICE

guiding and supporting family caregivers of mentally ill persons

Broad aims:

- To fill a gap in community mental health care in Malta.
- To acknowledge, affirm, guide and support family caregivers of mentally ill persons as key providers of community mental health care.
- To combat stigma and reduce self-stigma.

More specifically:

- To prevent caregiver burnout, depression, job loss and family break-up.
- To bolster caregiver resilience, caregiving stamina and commitment through a range of interventions that include family consultations, emotional freedom therapeutic work, support group and mediation with the wider state mental health care system.
- To model an interdisciplinary practice at community level in support of caregiving families.

Family caregivers of mentally ill persons constitute a category of Maltese citizens who lack support in fulfilling their challenging and overwhelming caregiving responsibility.

As is evidenced by SJAF practice and research carried out by the European Union Federation of Associations of Families of the Mentally Ill (EUFAMI), family caregivers of mentally ill persons are prone to become highly anxious and depressed. Constant caregiving becomes a major family stressor. Through the LWIEN service, the Foundation comes in regular contact with distressed family caregivers whose financial means are diminished, constraining the family to sell assets, abandon their job or switching to a less demanding one, 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.

The Service

The LWIEN Service is run by a Senior Psychiatric Nurse who provides family consultations via the IT-mediated tools such as facebook messenger, WhatsApp facetime and skype. The focus of the service is the relative who has assumed primary caregiving responsibility of a loved one needing guidance, advice and support. In 2021, the Psychiatric Nurse held 1,724 sessions with family caregivers during weekdays including during 70 weekend days.

Caregivers supported came from all over Malta. In those cases where sufferers themselves try to access the service, the Psychiatric Health Nurse meets up with them to determine whether they are already linked to mainstream state mental health services. If it is determined that they are not, efforts are made to help the sufferer access support as quickly as possible. In cases where the sufferer insists on accessing private mental health services and has no other community-based support, the Mental Health Nurse monitors the sufferer from the point at which they visit a psychiatrist until a period of six months to ensure that the person is doing well. At that stage, the case is closed unless, during that period, and with the sufferer's consent, the service succeeds in reaching out to the sufferer's family to offer guidance and support.

The Emotional Freedom Service, linked to the Lwien Service, was partly suspended in 2021 for reasons beyond pur control, serving 17 persons who wished to release their emotional distress.

Caregiving families supported in 2021

In 2021, the Lwien Service provided intense support to a total of 235 individuals from 129 families. Of the 106 newly referred relatives, 99 shouldered primary caregiving responsibilities.

	Total families	Total Individuals	Gender of the individuals benefiting from LWIEN
New families referred in 2021	84	106	81 females/ 25 males
Families who continued to be supported from previous years	111	129	96 females/ 33 males
TOTAL	129	235	106 females/ 129 males

Types of mental illnesses suffered by family members cared for by the 84 families referred in 2021

Depression (60*); Post-partum depression (6*)	23
Severe Anxiety	18
Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) (11*) + Paranoia (5*);	16
Schizophrenia	10
Bi-polar Disorder	9
Severe ADHD	8

* families having more than one member suffering from a mental illness

Who were the newly referred primary caregivers caring for?

A son or daughter:	29 (17 a son; 12 a daughter)
A Sibling	10 (7 a brother; 3 a sister)
A Parent	10 (9 mothers; 1 father)
A spouse/ partner	23 (16 a husband/male partner; 7 a wife/ female partner)
A nephew or niece	6
Self (carers anxious that they may be falling into a depression)	19
An aunt	1
A son-in-law	1

Effective liaison with the mental health system

Maintaining effective links with existing 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 2021. Liaison with mental health services for sufferers was maintained to maximise positive outcomes for the families involved.

Since the start-up of the Lwien Service in August 2010, the service has provided guidance and support to 2,502 individuals from 1,632 caregiving families of mentally ill persons.

Fondazzjoni St Jeanne Antide
24 April 2021

Everyone feels nervous or on edge every now and then. Some people experience intense fear and worry much more frequently — and it can be devastating. Anxiety causes excess emotional and psychological stress — but it can also affect you physically.

If you think you're experiencing an anxiety disorder, get in touch with us and we'll help you through. There are numerous support systems available that suit your needs.

More info: <https://youthinfo.gov.mt/>

#mentalhealth #seekhelp #youarenotalone

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A STATISTICAL OVERVIEW ACROSS SERVICES

All new cases in 2021 across all SJAF Services

During the 15-year time-span since SJAF was set up – 2007 to 2021 - SJAF has provided support to 7,722 individuals from 4,347 vulnerable families through its range of support services.

In 2021 alone, SJAF provided a range of support services to 884 families. Of these, 215 were new referrals involving interventions with 1103 family members; 454 were ones that continued to be supported from previous years.

The following charts summarise the main type of difficulty for which families turned to SJAF for support, the localities where families reside and the referral source.

Main presenting problem of new referred families in 2021	Number of families	% of total
Overwhelmed and anxious family caregivers of severely mentally ill persons / mental illness	83	
Financial difficulties and slide into poverty	76	
Abuse in intimate relationships	17	
Emotional distress	17	
Homelessness & substandard housing	5	
Conflictual family relations and inability to manage family affairs	5	
Ill health and frailty	1	
Other	11	
TOTAL	215	

Locality of residence of 215 families referred in 2021

Locality of residence	Number of families
Fgura	20
Paola	24
Hal Tarxien	11
Birżebbuġa	15
Marsaskala	6
Santa Lucia	2
Other localities	137
TOTAL	215

Source of 215 new referrals

Referral source	Number	Referral source	Number
Self-referrals	70	Relatives	17
State-agencies	36	Friends	14
Other service users & volunteers	33	Private practitioners	8
Church-based organisations	30	Others	7

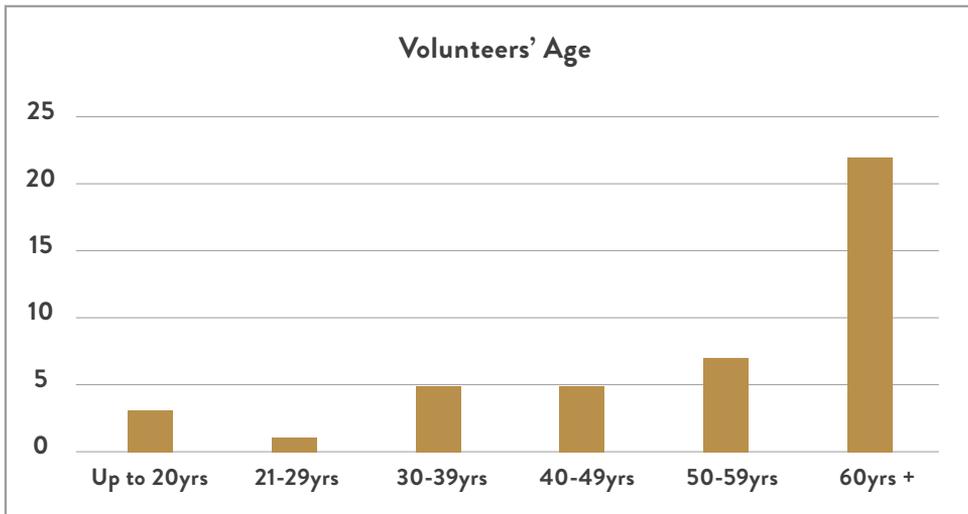
New cases of vulnerable families supported between 2007 and 2021

Year	Individuals	Families
2021	1,103	215
2020	684	367
2019	533	313
2018	664	381
2017	706	375
2016	622	397
2015	543	373
2014	424	288
2013	481	320
2012	473	298
2011	540	324
2010	412	284
2009	185	150
2008	231	169
2007	121	93
TOTAL for 2007-2021	7,722	4,347

Volunteering:

As with the previous year, COVID19 left its mark on SJAF volunteering in 2021. In 2021, SJAF had a total of 44 active volunteers who provided a range of services which included, among others: Reception work (6), Handicrafts making (13), Mentoring (3), SOAR Volunteers (10), Handymen (2), Food Aid and Hygiene Bank coordination (4), SOAR Youth Group (4), EFS (1), Fundraising (2).

Volunteering hours in 2021 totalled 7,587 hours – equivalent to practically 4 full-time workers. Were the hours of service of volunteers to be remunerated, their service would have cost the Foundation a minimum of €40,095. Their service contribution is invaluable and valued. Volunteers are considered as partner colleagues of the SJAF professionals.



Continuing Professional Development opportunities

57 online continuing professional development sessions were accessed by SJAF personnel and volunteers throughout the year. Themes covered included the following: overviews of services provided by other agencies (15); local and EU social policies (12); approaches to family support work (5); financial management (4); new legislations (6); health and safety (5); contemporary social issues (4); outcome of research studies (2); personal development (2); advocacy (1); and IT systems (1).

Fondazzjoni St Jeanne Antide
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Good morning! Last Friday, 13 of us participated in a very insightful and helpful Continuous Professional Development training session on the LET ME LEARN PROCESS delivered by the Let Me Learn team members from the [Let Me Learn Malta](#) Centre within the Department for Inclusion and Access to Learning of the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. Valerie Salerno, Tania Farrugia, and Sarah Degiovanni led the session which helped us learn tools that enable us to understa... See more

940 People reached 113 Engagements ↑ +1.6x higher Distribution score [Boost post](#)



Fondazzjoni St Jeanne Antide

Published by Nora Macelli · 7 July 2021 ·



Today we held a half day continuing professional development session (CPD). First hour focused on loss and letting go facilitated by our external SMT mentor Jesmond Friggieri while the second half of 2.5 hours was a much appreciated session led by one of our Social Workers - Roberta Micallef - on The Protection of Minors Act. We are now having a fellowship meal together and are savouring 2 superb Syrian deserts - Knafeh and Baklava - made with love for us all by our Outreach Worker Emtethal.



In-kind support resources provided by personnel across SJAF services for their service users

- 428 food and hygiene bank aid packages;
- 152 Christmas packages containing food and personal and home hygiene items which included toys for every child – from newly born to the age of 18 years;
- 225 gifts to children and 16 gifts to elderly persons
- €3,745 raised online for 10 packages of re-usable nappies for poor single mothers costing €360 each.
- Provision of voucher donations to the value of €5,740
- 22 donations of back-to-school educational resources according to lists provided by schools.
- 4 facebook appeals for in-kind supports: (1) Back-to-School Educational Resources; (2) Reverse Advent Calendar appeal for food items as well as detergents and personal hygiene items; (3) Re-usable Nappies; and (4) shopping bags to prepare aid packages (over 350 collected).
- Baby clothing, toiletries, toys according to age, gender and families needing them;
- Second-hand furniture through the network of church-based organisations that offers and makes use of donated second-hand furniture;
- 6 baby hospital bags;
- Vouchers for baby milk; and
- 6 laptops to service users.



In conclusion, we wish to share with our Corporate Prayer with our stakeholders. It reflects who we are and our motivating force. With gratitude to one and all.



*St Jeanne Antide
Foundation*

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.





*St Jeanne Antide
Foundation*

St Jeanne Antide Foundation – May 2021

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