

A PHOTO JOURNEY OF THE AFGHAN  
CHILDREN EDUCATION IN ALBANIA

SMALL THINGS WITH  
**GREAT  
LOVE**

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A PHOTO JOURNEY OF THE AFGHAN  
CHILDREN EDUCATION IN ALBANIA



**Dedication**

This photo album is dedicated to Afghan and Albanian communities of Shengjin, Lezhe who collaborated together to create an environment of hope and dignity guided by the best interest of children.

The Non-Formal Education Program has been such a great contribution for ensuring that Afghan children have a smooth transition to their final destination.

# Foreword

Copyright

**Albanian Social Services Association**

This intervention is undertaken in the framework of the “Securing child rights in times of irregularity” a joint project with UNICEF, in partnership with Albanian Government funded by the USAID.

Parental consent has been taken for all photos published in this album.

Design and Layout

**HL Branding**

Photography

**Eriona Çami**

**Tirana, 2022**

In August 2021, the Albanian Government announced the readiness to host and accommodate 4,000 evacuees affected by the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, and to handle this task, established a dedicated governmental “task force”. As of mid-October 2021, over 2000 Afghans, including adults and children, arrived in Albania (around 40% of the evacuees were children).

In this framework, with support of USAID and Ministry of Education and Sports, UNICEF in collaboration with Albanian Social Services Association (ASSA) conducted a Rapid Assessment of Education Needs, which intended to understand learning needs and priorities of Afghan children (6-18 years old). Soon after that, based on the assessment findings, an effective response was designed which resulted in setting up a Non-Formal Education Program for children 6-18 years old, in Shengjin, Lezhe.

Non-Formal Education Program for Afghan children in Shengjin, Lezhe took place at the premise of local public school At Zef Pllumbi. A newly reconstructed school environment, with about 200 Albanian students from grade 1-9, welcomed 346 Afghan children aged 7-18 years old to attend their non-formal education program. Non-Formal Education Program through: 1) providing knowledge in basic areas such as Numeracy, Literacy, Science 2) supporting students’ socio-emotional wellbeing through SEL, Sport, Art; 3) teaching new skills through Computer course; 4) introducing them with information needed for their destination countries (USA/ Canada) through Life Skills course; 5) providing students with an opportunity to pass time in a constructive way; 6) providing them with opportunity to learn in mix gender classes for the first time; and 7) intercultural exchange and joint activities of Albanian and Afghan communities – has been such a great contribution for ensuring that Afghan children have a smooth transition to their final destination.

# HUMAN STORIES

## My name is Wajiba

We were happy in Afghanistan. I was in 2nd grade in school. I left my friends and teachers. One day I saw my mother was so scared and sad. I asked her what happened and why are you sad. My mother told me the Taliban are coming, and the security situation was bad.

My mother told me that I could not go to school again. I miss my friends. We went to Kabul and stayed at my aunt's house. One day my parents received a call that we should go to Kabul airport. We stayed one night around the airport. It was a bad night. All people were sad. We slept on the ground. It was so cold. The next day was a big explosion at the airport and most of the people, children and women were killed. Before the explosion we received a call to leave the airport. I heard a lot of bad news from the airport. Then we went to Mazar-e-sharif and flew to Georgia and then to Albania. The hotel here in Shengjin is so beautiful, but I missed my relatives, my school, and my friends. Sometimes we call each other. Now I go to school every day and I have some friends, but I never forget my old friends and my beautiful country.



Wajiba Mohammadi, 3rd grade – March 2022, Shengjin, Lezhe

## My name is Abdul

I am Abdul Musawer Yahyah from Afghanistan. This is the story of our trip from Afghanistan to Albania. I was in the twelfth grade in Afghanistan and was preparing for the Kankor examination. We had a good life in our country but suddenly the country was taken over by the Taliban and everything collapsed.

Since my father was working with a US-based company on the rehabilitation of irrigation systems in Afghanistan, we couldn't stay anymore in Afghanistan. When the government changed the situation got worse day by day and there was no education system, no working opportunities, and no freedom. After August 15th it was not possible to stay in our home and we stayed in another province for more than one month. Finally, after 40 difficult days, we were able to get out of Afghanistan by the support of an US organization. On September 23rd, we departed Mazar e sharif for Georgia then on September 24th, I landed in Albania with my family and were accommodated in Rafaelo resort hotel. Since we are here, life is getting better, and we are happy with the local people and the environment. For a long time, we were free, without any specific plan until about five months after the UNICEF started an informal school with Afghan teachers in Shengjin city of Albania for Afghan refugees. I am so happy to see the teenagers and children can go to school and continue their education before they go to their destination country.



Abdul Musawer Yahyah – April, 2022, Shengjin, Lezhe

## CHAPTER 1

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# GOING

The Non-Formal Education Program for Afghan children took place at the premise of a local public school in Shengjin, Lezhë. This chapter documents their everyday itinerary at the “At Zef Pllumbi” school.







Implementing the “Non-Formal Education of Afghan children” project, we had the great chance to be part of another historic opportunity where Albania showed to be a small country with a big heart. Intercultural exchange among Afghan and Albanian children in the environments of public school At Zef Pllumi’ in Shengjin, Lezhe has been such an enriching experience for both communities – it helped children and teens to discover that a multitude of similarities exist between us all; it also provided them with opportunity to become open and tolerant to new things. Thanks to the cooperation of all actors involved in project, this was such a successful and valuable experience

**LIVIA NANO – ASSA**

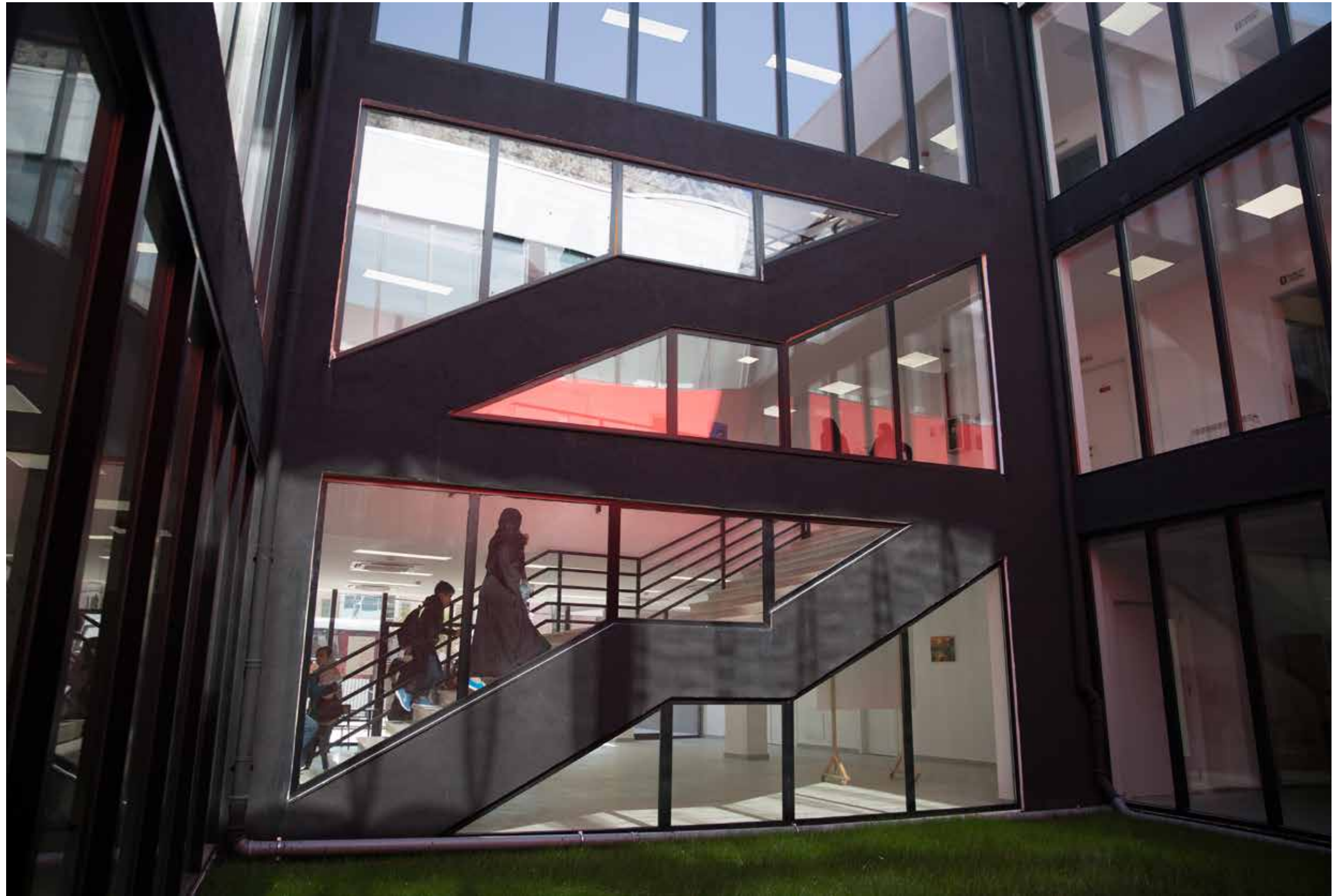




“

The school here in Albania is fantastic! We love the school, our teachers and our classmates. We have a great time here and we want it to continue indefinitely.

”





For the first time in non-formal education, a special emphasis was placed on learning through play, education of emotions, and life skills. The creation of receptive classes with a positive emotional climate, where students feel more empowered, as well as mentoring or continuous psychological support for teachers and students, was an extremely important focus in this project.

**RENISA BEQIRI - ASSA**



## CHAPTER 2

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# CLASSES

The newly reconstructed school, with about 200 Albanian students from grade 1-9, welcomed 346 Afghan children aged 7-18 years old to attend their non-formal education program in six different topics.



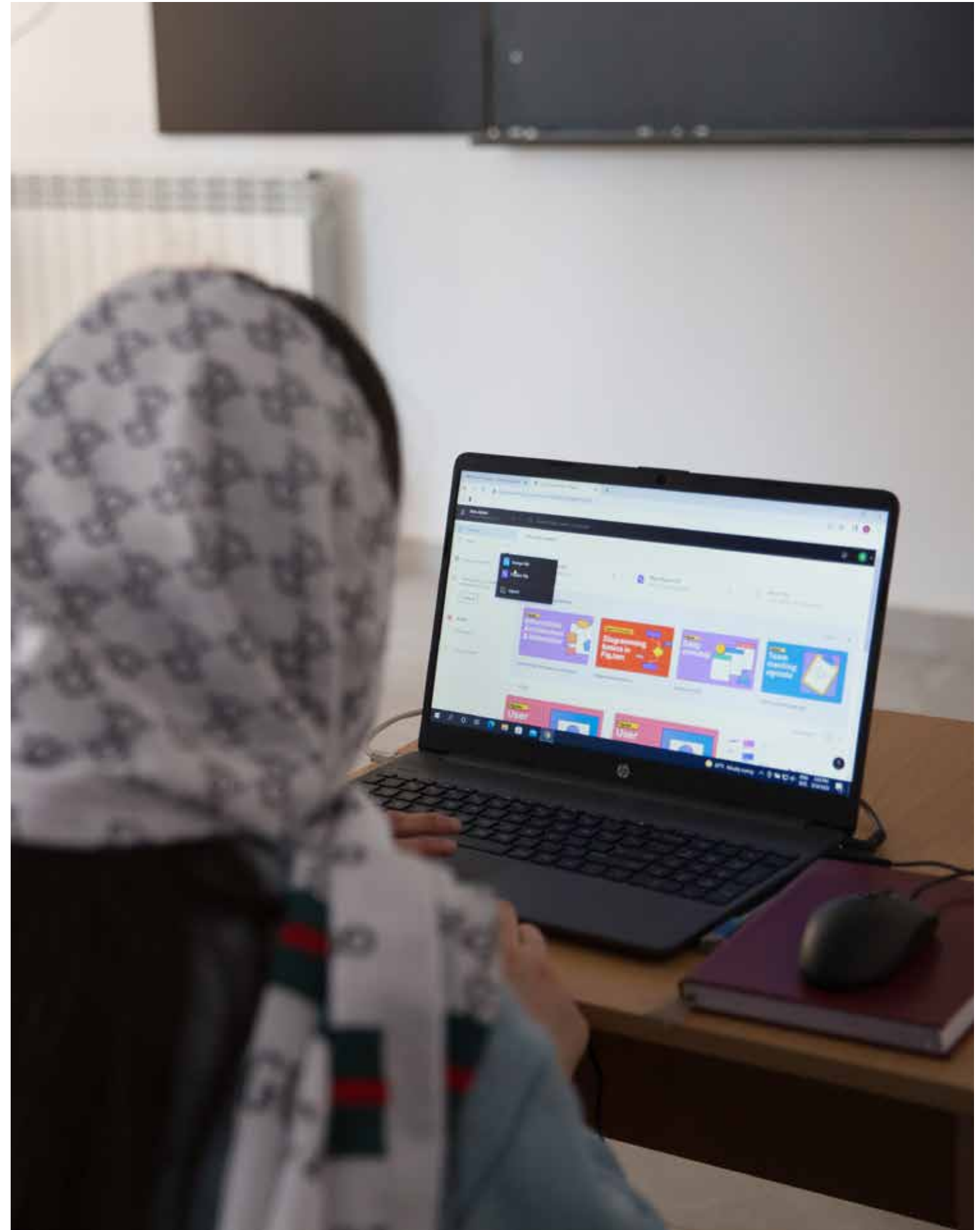




The model of Albanians is Mother Teresa! She was noted throughout the world for her charitable works and noble spirit. We are happy that today the tradition continues, and we are trying to help by making available all our capacities to welcome the Afghan children and teachers to the 'At Zef Pllumi' Shengjin School.

**QAMIL SOKOLAJ - THE PRINCIPAL OF THE ALBANIAN SCHOOL  
'AT ZEF PLLUMI', SHENGJIN**







“

For the first time in my life, I saw the sea in Albania. The most fantastic thing in the world! I like it because the school is near the sea and the hotel room too, and I have learned to swim.

”

Afghan children, parents and the education staff integrated very well with the community of Shengjin. I am very proud that the Albanian people have welcomed the Afghan community and I am sure that one day when these children grow up they will want to come back and visit our country that offered them a shelter and warmth in their most difficult moments.

**EVIS KUSHI - ALBANIAN MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS**







As the Afghan coordinator at "At Zef Pllumi school", I am delighted that Afghan children in Albania were not deprived of the blessings of education with the support of UNICEF and the Albanian government. I do confirm that Afghan children were spiritually alive by participating in school and filled with joy like birds as John Dewey stated that "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."

**PARIGUL NABIZADA - AFGHAN SCHOOL COORDINATOR**



Starting school was a much awaited event for all Afghan children, some of them have not been in school for a long time. I cannot forget how the first days when school opened children were lining up half an hour before the school bus schedule as they were looking forward to join Albanian friends in school and learn. There was such a big desire to learn

After attending the program , the Afghani students showed progress across all areas, socio emotional learning, literacy, and life skills and a bit less in mathematics and science. Regarding social outcomes, the programme has prepared students to transition to their destination countries and succeed in the classroom. Students have also gained a sense of belonging in Albania. Very proud to have worked with MOE and USAID to ensure Afghani children's education in Albania!

**MIRLINDA BUSHATI - EDUCATION SPECIALIST, UNICEF**







The non-formal education program was a success in so many ways. Providing a much-needed continuation of learning for children, instilling hope and confidence for parents about their children's futures, creating a routine and sense of normalcy for children whose lives and education have faced far too many disruptions, and opening up a world of new possibilities through computer, art, and sport classes. The greatest proof of the impact of this program was seeing the children lining up on their own, often 1 hour early, in anticipation of going to school each day. Well done and thank you to all involved.

**CHRIS LAY**















I am so happy to see that Afghan children were able to attend and enjoy art classes. It's not a secret that art has a universal language that helps children to express their desires, their hopes, and their dreams, for their own country and for themselves.

**ROBERTO DE BERNARDI - REPRESENTATIVE UNICEF ALBANIA**



“

I like all the subjects at school. They are all very nice and we have the best teachers in the world!

We have everything here, from pencils and notebooks - to the gym or creative games. It is very nice in our school!

”



“At Zef Pllumi School is a place where children can learn while feeling comfortable and safe--so that all children living in Albania have safe spaces to learn, interact, and grow together. On behalf of USAID, I would like to acknowledge the strength and resilience of the Afghan staff and students, as well as the many others who were dedicated to turning this vision into reality.”

**MISCHERE KAWAS - USAID/ ALBANIA COUNTRY DIRECTOR**

## CHAPTER 3

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# ACTIVITIES

The Afghan children had the opportunity to learn in mix gender classes for the first time and become part of intercultural events between Albanian and Afghan communities.









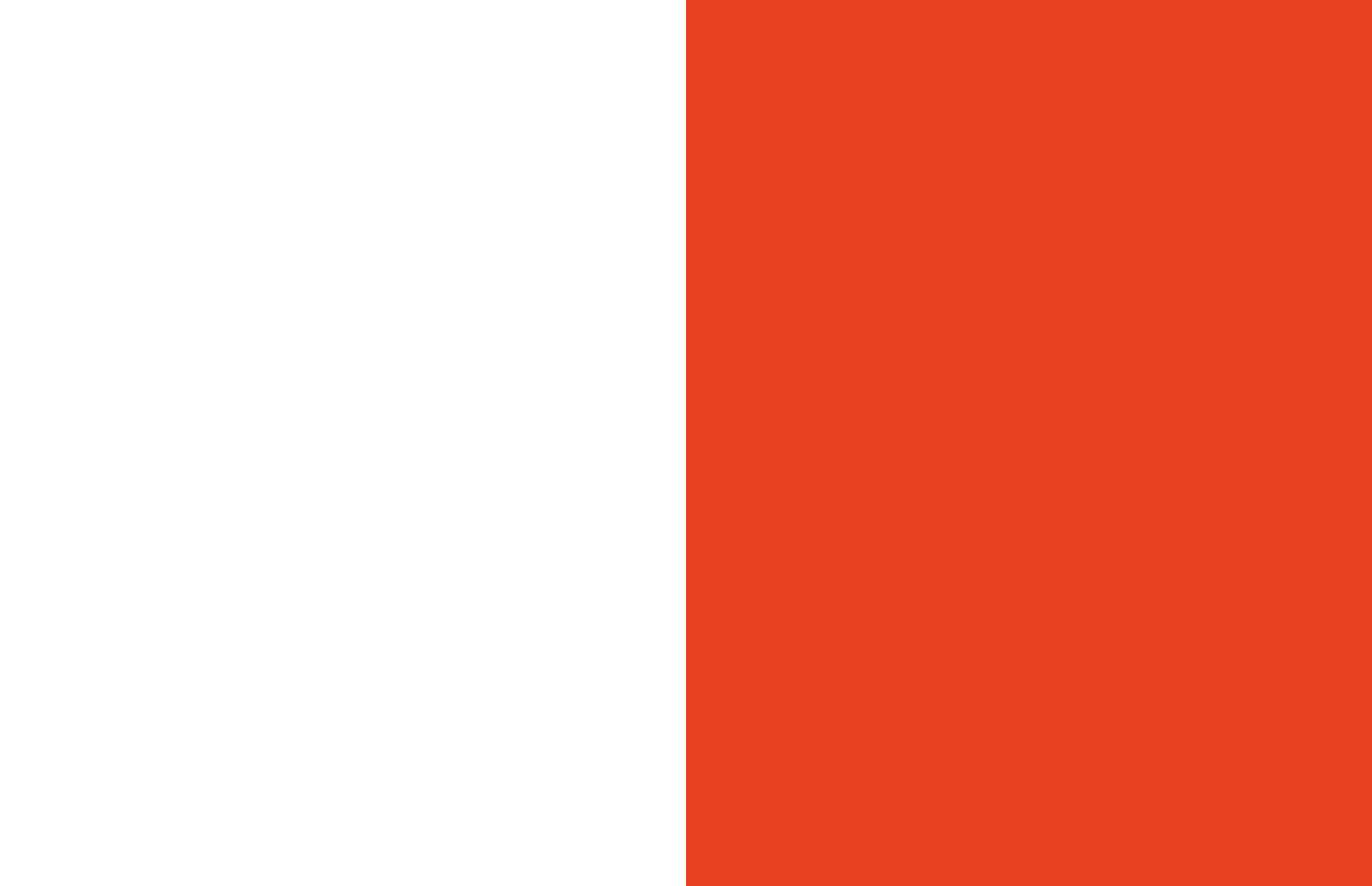




“  
Sometimes, when we want to look at  
the sea, the teachers take us there, and  
we do the lesson in the nature, next to  
the sea. It's so beautiful!

”





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LOVE**



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

