

**Dear Friends,** **January 2007**  
I trust this reaches you well and healthy at the start of another year, ready for the changes and challenges that 2007 may bring.

Recently it was the late dictator Enver Hoxher's birthday and the Albanian national news was showing footage of people still paying homage to him, 21 years after his death and 14 years since democracy took its footing in this left behind and shut off part of the world. Albania today, in this decade, has certainly undergone a course of rapid change in many aspects, but in other aspects there are steps backwards. **While the capital city and main towns whiz into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with enterprise, sophistication and modern comforts, the villages are depleting and left desperately behind.** The gap between them is ever widening. During my 14 year connection with Albania, the speed of change in the city is enough to make you dizzy. Everywhere you look there are new buildings and businesses. From UK 'Top Gear' or US 'Fear Factor' on TV, to a shopping mall with a super market. This year the government declared that tourism was up by 42% on last summer season. Albania is not the place it was even 5-8 years ago; however behind the scenes and off the beaten track there is a different story to tell, and it's not so bright, to say the least!!

Shkëndijë is also changing and developing, slow but sure. **2006 was a challenging, yet rewarding, year with a number of new projects and developments.**

March saw the **return of Valentina** to staff, after getting engaged and since married. It's great to have her back on board after nearly 3 years of previous training. She's doing a wonderful job with the children's work and the 5 young team helpers she's now disciplining (4 are on photo). She's still seeking regular supporters who will partner with her.

Also, in March, Agustin joined team for a 4 month stretch to assist towards **Project "Baywatch"**. After seeing several people die on Shengjin beach and no one doing anything about it, it was time for Shkëndijë to take action as one of our 'Care in the Community' projects. This was by far the biggest and most complex project we've done. The project involved working with the local Council, Police and Health care service. It was sprung into being with the fantastic help of UK Paramedic, Tim Miles and his wife Hayley, (along with their two children who were called upon to be 'dummies'!). They came out to Albania in May to do the B.L.S training with the 12 selected applicants, of whom, 6 were chosen to be lifeguards. The project

was a **great success, reaching its goal of Zero deaths** through the 10 week summer season, (statistically there are 2/3 deaths each season). As a further result, we now have greater respect and a louder voice in this community, which we've used and continue to use for the benefit of the Kingdom. God is good and He is working out His plans and purposes in this place.

Also, during the summer, Shkëndijë ran **3 Children's Camps**, predominantly for children of churches from Northern Albania. This was the first time we have done camps of this sort. Our desire was to run a 'Full on' Christian camp which would stretch and challenge the children. However we did allow a small percentage of none Christian children, **27 of whom made first time commitments.** Praise God for this. All enjoyed the great, out door activities which Rachel Edwards of LightForce headed up. We are very grateful to LightForce for their help and support to making camp happen. A number of pastors received **glowing reports** from children's parents, of the positive changes they had seen in their children. The children also **testified themselves to the great things God did in them at camp.** We wish to develop camp as a regular summer children's ministry for Church children.

Besides these projects, we have continued our **regular weekly activities** through out the year:

#### **Children's Program:**

Each Friday, we've been gathering up to 70 children for our fun-packed teaching programme. Some of the children are so keen that they turn up more than an hour early! It's an encouragement to see a lot of them really opening up in worship. Recently we've seen a number of new faces and some old ones coming back.

#### **Out in the Community:**

The children's leaflet distribution, which includes visits to parents, has been enhanced by Vali's return. Both the parents and children seem to have become more open and responsive. Some mothers are now following the 'Word for Today' and asking lots of questions.

#### **Computer Course:**

54 students have passed through our courses this year. The service we provided is greatly valued as it's not taught in school and there is no one else teaching computer here. At this point to mention that we are very grateful for all Ditjon's input to Shkëndijë over these two years, managing its IT needs, developing the computer course, along with translation and design work. But unfortunately, under family economical pressures he's

had to leave his service with us and to move to Tirana for a higher paid job. We wish him well and hold him in our prayers.

**The English Course** has not run again this year, due to still not having an English teach. If you are interested or know any one that might be **interested in teaching** either a part time English course during term time(8months) or an intensive summer course, please contact us. Thank-you.

We continue to have **good relationships with the local school** in Shengjin even though a new school director has taken over. Since September when schools returned, we've been **teaching a different health topic** each month, with the help from a Peace Corps volunteer.

Shkëndijë tries to do **two parents out reaches** a year. 2006 saw an outdoor children's talent contest in June called 'The Star's of Shengjin'. **Over 120 parents & children gathered for the contest and 'God slots'.** The judging panel of 5 was made up of 'high profile' people from the community and two English volunteers. Also there was the recent Christmas outreach called 'Did you know.?', where **over 60 invited came to the presentation** followed by finger food cocktail. Both events were thoroughly enjoyed by all and not only were many challenged but it's also having a great impact on the work generally.

In closing, I'm sure you'll agree it's been a busy year for us, including lots of opportunities where seed was sown. The Bible verse that we have on our hearts for 2007, is **Rev 14:15 "...the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."** Please join with us that we may accomplish together the great tasks that lie ahead this year and in to the future.

A brief 8 month future overview is overleaf.

Many thanks to those who uphold us and our ministry in Prayer and Sacrificial giving—**Together we are making the difference in people's lives and hearts. Thank-you!**

With love in our Lord, Rachel & the Shkëndijë team.

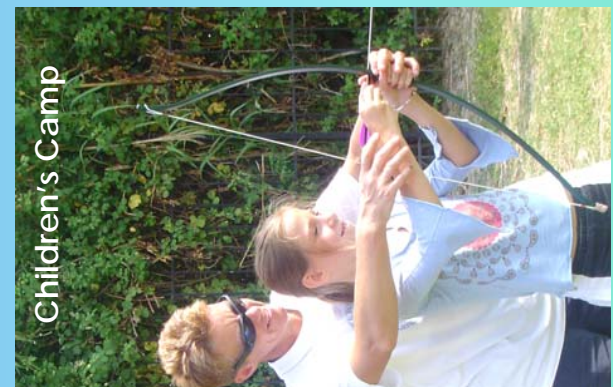
**Please note:** if you do not receive the quarterly email news updates and would like too, please email us on the address over leaf, and we'll be sure to place you on the email news list. Because of rising printing and postage costs, Shkëndijë will only be posting paper mail-outs once a year unless other wise requested.

## GIVE PRAISE FOR:

- The Return of Vali to Shkëndijë staff.
- The Success of Project 'Baywatch'.
- The Spiritual growth of the young girls that help with Kids out reach.
- The Signs of harvest after a lot of sowing.
- The Great result from the summer Children's Camps.

## PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- Workers for the Harvest.
- 2007 the Year of Harvest and Advance.
- Godly Wisdom and Patience in 2007 – Big decisions and changes.
- The Albanian Team and their support.
- The 5 young helpers, being discipled.
- Problems: Corruption, Trafficking-(drug & human), Opinion-(living for the eyes of others)
- Direction in Future Events, until September:
  - Children worker's Training in Kosovo (March)
  - Camp training conference (4/5 May)
  - Project 'Baywatch' – Training (May)
  - Team form Austria – Youth outreach and Training (June end)
  - Big Children's outreach in 16 areas of the capital, Tirana, working with Campus Crusade (July 13 -28<sup>th</sup>)
  - Children's Camps (mid-end August)



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