



# Streha

A N N U A L   R E P O R T

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Kingdom of the Netherlands



Astraea LESBIAN FOUNDATION FOR JUSTICE

## *Dear colleagues and friends,*

During our work over the years we have faced many youth in difficulty. Hence the desire to help and give direction to life of tens of homeless LGBT youth, brought the establishment of the “Streha” shelter. When in December 2014 “Streha” shelter opened the doors for the first beneficiaries, no one knew for sure which would be the impact that the service would have in the life of the youngest and most excluded LGBTI community in Albania.

“Streha” shelter came as an initiative of “Aleanca LGBT” and “Pro LGBT”, but today, two years later, “Streha” has managed to be an independent institution. This service not only changed the lives of over 35 young people excluded from family and society, but has had and continues to have a direct impact on advancing the movement for the rights of the LGBT community in Albania. The data obtained from the “Streha” shelter are the best means to understand the problems faced by LGBT youth and to determine which are their needs.

Young people who have been able to reintegrate into society have taught us that if we work today to challenge discrimination, to combat exclusion, to say no to violence in the family and beyond, we will have tomorrow a more inclusive society. A society that does not celebrate diversity but considers it as a risk is a society that walks in the opposite direction of the history.

But all this work was made possible thanks to cooperation with public institutions, organizations, businesses and especially with all the activists of the movement for the rights of the LGBT community in Albania.

Shelter has shown achievement and has met its objectives, thanks to the contribution from the Executive Director, Ms. Marsida Cela and the hardworking team of Streha Shelter.

I want to thank on this occasion those who together with me and Kristi, threw the first stone for the building of the “Streha” shelter - Clare Masson, Michael Kane, Matty Timmy, Iva Sinani, Erjon Tela, Kejda Jahja, Edlira Mara, Alba Ahmetaj, Livia Zotrija, and many others who tirelessly had the vision to turn Streha into an independent and sustainable service.

I believe that 2017 will be a year of success for “Streha” and hope that we will continue to rely upon the local and international institutions and organizations.

*Kindly yours,*

Xheni Karaj

Board Chair, Streha Center

*Dear All,*

Thank you all for your support of the shelter and its continuing efforts to build a stronger future. The collaboration of the business community, government awareness, diplomatic bodies, state officials representative of international organizations, and LGBT community members have shown to help those in need develop skills towards independence to achieve their dreams.

I would like to make some brief remarks that are very important for the Streha shelter, the LGBT community, and Streha's work.

I would like to thank USAID and the Albert Kennedy Trust for supporting the establishment of the Shelter and its work; The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth for supporting the Shelter's work through Agency for the Support of Civil Society;

Special thanks go to the the Dutch Embassy for continuing the support of the Shelter for the upcoming year in the framework of Matra Programme, as well as to the US Embassy that is supporting publication of this report in the framework of in the framework of Democracy Commission Small grant program.

Additionally, many thanks go to public figures of LGBT movement in Albania, Xheni Karaj from Aleanca LGBT, Kristi Pinderi from ProLGBT,

who have been supporting Streha with their activism despite their engagement within their respective organizations. With our combined efforts, Streha shelter has accomplished great strides. Streha understands the importance of building strong community members. By meeting basic needs and providing a safe space to flourish, Streha beneficiaries receive medical/ legal assistance, counseling services, Vocational training, and are connected to appropriate employment opportunities. Currently over 35 Streha members are paving the way towards stronger community ties and making meaningful contributions.

More work lies ahead as we persist to bring about awareness and oppressions that occur within the LGBT community regarding their homes, families, workplace, and public spaces. We will Work hard to continue to gather referrals for those in need as well as build ongoing outreach work with institutions.

Thank you all once again for working together and providing generous support for Streha.

Sincerely  
Marsida Çela  
Executive Director

# OUR MISSION

STREHA" is a concrete transistor service for at risk homeless LGBTI youth 18-25 years old that face the threat of eviction from their houses (usually at the stage of coming out) or for those whose life is made impossible because of threats, domestic violence, discrimination and stigma.

## Introduction

### About us

"Streha" shelter is the first non-public residential center in Southern Eastern Europe, which helps the LGBTI community in emergency of housing and accommodation. It started as a pilot project of two main LGBTI organizations in Albania, Alliance against LGBT Discrimination in collaboration with United ProLGBT Cause respectively since opening its door in December 2014.

"Streha" is active as an independent NGO since 13 November 2015, is a concrete transition service for all LGBTI young people from age 18 to 25 that face violence and discrimination from family and/or local community (usually at the stage of coming out) making their life impossible to live. Streha Center is licensed since January 2015 to provide residential and social care service by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth.

Cases under 18 years old and over 25 years old are subject of consideration of a case by case basis based on the assessment of the professional staff at the Shelter.

Streha provides services of reintegration to at risk homeless LGBT through 8 staff members, in total 24 hours, 7 days a week. "Streha" shelter has a capacity of eight beds and aims to be a service and assistance to at risk homeless LGBTI youth at national level.

A multidisciplinary team of the "Streha" shelter makes the initial assessment of each case, case by case and accepts the requirement for housing in the "Streha" shelter based on a clear protocol and very rigorous, designed in accordance with national standards with the assistance of USAID and Assist Impact, of the existing shelters in Albania and especially with the assistance of the shelters network of "Albert Kennedy Trust" in Great Britain that works since 1989.

## Strategic Objectives

- ◆ Streha shelter beneficiaries have immediate rescue and protection
- ◆ Streha shelter beneficiaries have improved opportunities for re-integration/re-building their lives.
- ◆ Streha Shelter have outreached service Providers and beneficiaries

## Board Members

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Xheni Karaj – Head of Board

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Delina Fico – Board Member

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Vjollca Meçe – Board Member

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Erjon Tela – Board Member

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Sidita Zaja – Board Member

# Streha

## Supporters

Streha is supported by a diverse body of individuals and donor organizations who provide moral, technical, or other support. Streha attributes much of our success to our supporters, a dedicated and engaged facet of our organization. We wish we could name here every individual who contributed, but the list would be almost endless. Please know that we appreciate each of you as much as the following organizations that supported and funded Streha programs and activities in 2015-2016:

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USAID through ASSIST IMPACT

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Albert Kennedy Trust

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Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth through AMSHC

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ASTREA Foundation

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The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

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US EMBASSY

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Alliance against LGBT Discrimination

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United Pro LGBT Cause (ProLGBT)

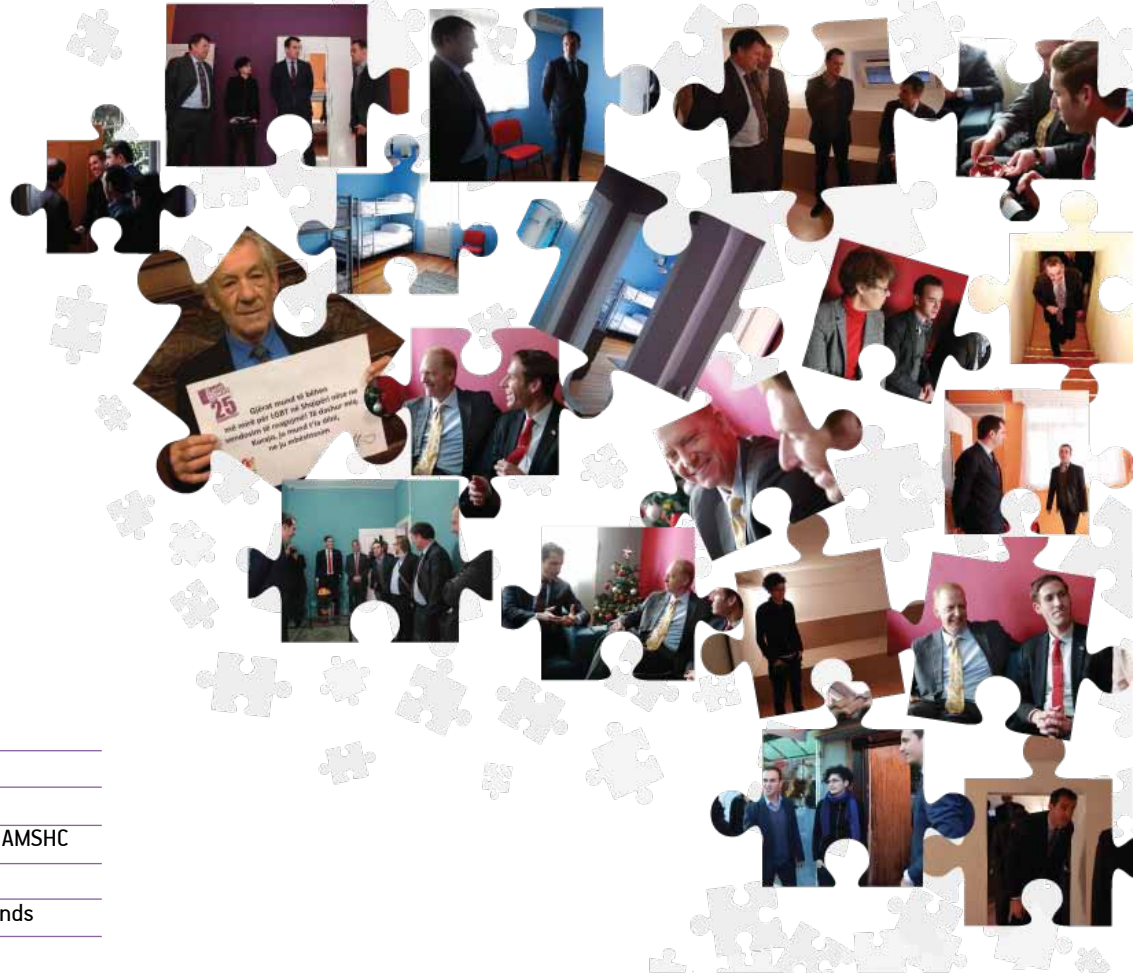
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Micheal Cane through ProLGBT

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Luke Dowding

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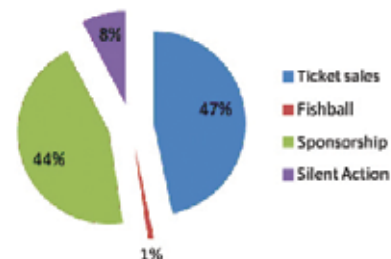


SKA NDAL Screening was another fund raising event during September 2015. Streha cooperated with Millenium cinema to screen the documentary Ska NDAL referring to the LGBTI movement in Albania. 12,625 ALL were collected and used for food of beneficiaries at the shelter.

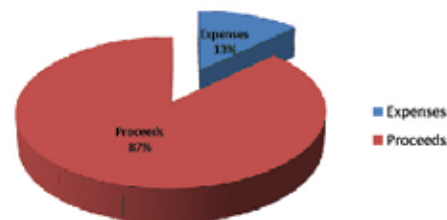
Streha conducted the second Charity Gala “Embrace Diversity, Support Progress” on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2016 at Palace of Brigades in order to support the Shelter for LGBT persons. The revenue of 19,000 USD collected are used to supporting our community and institutional outreach and reintegration program of employment, vocational training, and life skills respectively



### Type of incomes Gala 2016



### Expenses VS Proceeds



# Programs and Activities in 2015-16

of social services in local governmental units and regional council, health, education, police, respectively have been informed about shelter services. Streha Staff has intensively advocated the inclusion of its services in the existing referral mechanism. Service providers have emphasized the need for training regarding LGBTI issues, especially the school social workers and psychologist.

## Institutional Capacity Building

### Training with professional about referral mechanism of LGBTI



Besides the basic service, the Shelter has extensively worked for the distribution of the information in 12 regional councils in Albania regarding the service provided to the homeless LGBTI youth in risk of social exclusion because of sexual orientation. Over 300 service providers



# Networking and Experience Exchange

## Networking Meeting of the Balkans



During 2016, on 2nd and 3rd of November – Diakonie Kosova, the Psychosocial Centre for Trauma therapy organized a Balkan Network Meeting with the various mental health professionals, representatives of different Institutions and NGO's from Balkan countries.

Streha Center participated to introduce their work on trauma, the history of collective traumatic experiences, institutional mechanisms in providing professional treatment for LGBTIQ individuals that are excluded and are victims of domestic and other forms of violence.

This Balkan Network Meeting had also a special guest from the Trauma Support Centre in München of Germany, Mr. Gabriela Heyers, and Specialist in Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy who presented with the

group the history of its Centre's Establishment and the current working conditions of the Centre and gave beneficial ideas of further improvement for the same work done in Balkans.

The Balkan Network Meeting was evaluated as very beneficial and appropriate to the interests and concerns of the participants. All presented ideas for further meeting and advocacy and policy change for mental health services to be improved was based on current circumstances and conditions of Institutional gaps and NGO limited possibilities for providing advanced services to target groups.

## ERA Annual Conference



Streha Center participated in the first annual conference of LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey (ERA), in which they discussed how to create bridges between the legislation and the community, centered on mobility issues of justice and the implementation and bringing ideas, strategies, models that can improve the level of their application.

The main objective of the conference was that of promoting a stronger cooperation and closer between national and state authorities to local movements of LGBT rights.

## The 5th International Symposium Against Discrimination



Streha center participated in the 5th Symposium on International Anti-Discrimination in Ankara, Turkey on 08-10 December 2016. The event was attended by representatives and social workers working with LGBTI community, who presented the achievements and challenges of their daily work.

The symposium emphasized the need for incorporation education of LGBTI issues in academic curricula of social work. Streha provided practical experience, challenges and successes as well as ways to enforce inter - regional cooperation.



## Legal Framework

Streha Center has been part of the launching event of the National Action Plan on LGBTI people in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020 that took place in Tirana on 21 October 2016. National Action Plan on LGBTI people in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020 was approved in May 2016.

Also, the first meeting of the National Implementation and Coordination Mechanism (NICM), the working group tasked with monitoring the implementation of the above-mentioned Action Plan, was held in Tirana.

One of the main aims of the Action will be to facilitate the work of the NICM. At the moment, Streha is the only institutional mechanism in providing housing and accommodation to at risk homeless LGBTI youth.



# Protecting Homeless LGBTI Youth



LGBTI young people in Albania suffer from discrimination and stigma because of their orientation and sexual identity. In many cases they are threatened with eviction from the house, especially during the coming-out, or their life has become impossible due to threats of continued discrimination and violence within the family.

Streha Center is the first service in the region which undertakes to provide accommodation, security and protection for at risk homeless LGBTI youth. Location of the center is confidential and any information about beneficiaries or to those who work it is strictly forbidden to run out of the Shelter. These measures are necessary to preserve confidentiality and to ensure the safety of all LGBT individuals who are housed there.

## Services

- ◆ Basic needs (Housing/accommodation for 6 months up to one year depending on the case)
- ◆ Individual development Plans
- ◆ Referrals to specialized services
- ◆ Vocational training
- ◆ Life Skills
- ◆ Career counseling
- ◆ Medical assistance
- ◆ Psycho-social support
- ◆ Group Therapy
- ◆ Negotiation for employment
- ◆ Negotiation with families

### *To refer cases you may contact :*

**Web:** [www.strehalgbt.al](http://www.strehalgbt.al)

**Tel:** +355699839189

**Email:** [sos@strehalgbt.al](mailto:sos@strehalgbt.al)

[info@strehalgbt.al](mailto:info@strehalgbt.al)

[ndihme@strehalgbt.al](mailto:ndihme@strehalgbt.al)

Streha Page: [www.facebook.com/strehalgbtshqiperi/](https://www.facebook.com/strehalgbtshqiperi/)

Qendra Streha account: [www.facebook.com/streha.albania?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/streha.albania?fref=ts)



## Cases assisted by the Shelter

	L	G	B	T	Q	Total
2014-2015	4	4	2	1	1	12
2015-2016	7	7	4	4	1	23

Table 1. Distribution of beneficiaries by orientation and sexual identity

Referring to the above table, Streha supported 12 cases during 2014-2015 and 23 cases during 2015-2016.

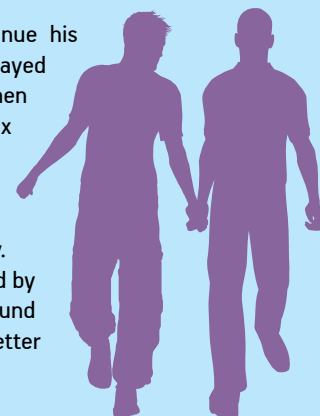
## Success stories

### *Berti's Story*

Berti entered in the Shelter in a period of psychological crisis that led him to some serious suicide attempts. After he entered in the Shelter he was diagnosed by the psychiatrist with Major Depression. He suffered a lot because of the past traumas and because of the difficulties in asserting his sexual orientation.

The staff of the Shelter was deeply and carefully involved due to the high risk situation, because of his self harming behavior and his previous suicide attempts. He received intensive psychological treatment in combination with a prescription of anti-depressants given by the psychiatrist. On the other side, he was a gifted and talented university student, with a specific passion for politics and social activism. All these strengths were valued assets and were used by the professionals of Streha in order to help him deal with all his psychological distress.

He was supported by Streha to continue his studies and his civil activism. He stayed in the Shelter for six months and then was supported in distance for other six months. Berti now is in a stable job, he is continuing his studies and is deeply involved in social activism by taking part in many initiatives of the civil society. After more than a year of therapy offered by the psychologist of the Shelter he found emotional stability and he feels much better now despite the continuous challenges.



## *Enkelejda's Story*

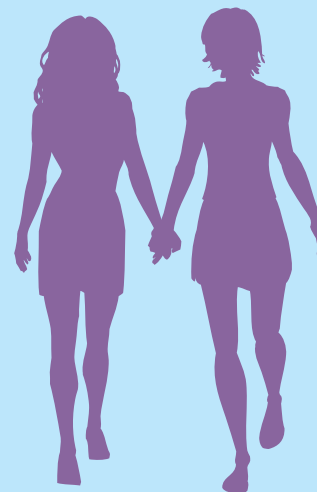
Enkelejda was 21 when she entered in the Shelter. She identified herself as bisexual and was in a long and stable relationship with a girl. When her family knew about her sexual orientation, they reacted very aggressively by locking her in the house. She was helped by her girlfriend to reach the services of the Shelter and considering her emergency situation she was accepted immediately in the service. In the beginning of her staying in the Shelter she was suffering from some anxiety issues. After she found emotional stability she started looking for a job. She found very quickly a suitable job and was very involved in her new job. She was helped to mediate with her family and started to communicate with her mother and also asked her to accept her sexual orientation. She was helped with the anxiety issues and also Streha Center helped her to receive some medical assistance for some chronic health problems that she has. She stayed at the Streha Center for other three months after she was employed.

Because of her very good performance at her profession, she succeeded to find a much better paid job. She live now independently, she is succeeding in her job and also the relationship with her family have been improved.



## *Moza's Story*

Moza was 23 when she applied to enter in the Shelter. She identified herself as bisexual. She was finding some difficulties with housing and also was facing some psychological difficulties. She was helped by the Streha Center to get the staying permit in Albania because she was not from Albania. She continued the counseling sessions regularly by addressing some issues of the past and some challenges of the present. Moza was a very good student and was very passionate about her profession. She was supported by Streha Center to continue her studies. Moza stayed at the Streha Center for six months. She is leaving now independently and time after time contacts the staff of the Shelter. She is continuing the university with excellent results and is following her dreams of becoming an artist.





# LGBTI's Rights

People around the world face violence and inequality and sometimes torture, even execution- because of who they love, how they look, or who they are. Sexual orientation and gender identity are integral aspects of our selves and should never lead to discrimination or abuse.

**Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)** persons in **Albania** are protected under a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. Both male and female same-gender sexual activity are legal in Albania, but households headed by same-gender couples are still not eligible for the same legal protections available to opposite-gender couples. Albania, as a whole, is still considered to be rather conservative, especially in public reactions regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) rights and visibility of LGBT people, however recent anti-discrimination legislation have made ILGA-Europe regard Albania as one of a very few countries in Europe which explicitly bans discrimination on the grounds of gender identity. Albania has ratified Protocol No. 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, moreover Albania was a signatory to the 2007 UN Declaration on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

## Former laws against homosexuality

Albania decriminalized homosexuality in 1995. The age of consent is equal at 14 for all, regardless of gender and/or sexual orientation since 2001. Ages of consent in Europe.

## Recognition of same-gender relationships

Same gender marriage or civil unions are not currently recognised in Albania. Even though Albania's Prime Minister Sali Berisha announced in July 2009 that he will support the recognition of same-gender civil marriages, the new law, approved on February 4, 2010 did not preview same-sex marriage

## Discrimination protections

On 4 February 2010, the Albanian Parliament unanimously adopted a comprehensive anti-discrimination law which banned discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. The law bans discrimination in all areas, including employment, the provision of goods and services, education, health care and housing.

## The situation for Human Rights Defenders in Albania

Human rights defenders struggle to be heard. Often politicians and the media discredit their opinions and recommendations. The media is not considered free and independent. LGBTI human rights defenders such as "Alliance against LGBT Discrimination" and "Pro LGBT" often face strong societal and cultural barriers when carrying out their work.



# Ten Rights in Focus of the human rights advocacy

*The right to life and physical integrity*

*The right to liberty and security of person*

*The right to respect for private life and family life*

*The right to a fair trial and to effective remedy*

*The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion*

*The right to the freedom of expression*

*The right to freedom of assembly and association*

*The rights to protection against hate speech and war propaganda*

*The right to political rights*

*The right to protection against discrimination*

## Other Programs

## Future Programs

Distance Case management is a future project designed help at risk homeless LGBTI youth who are in difficulties, but need either less help for reintegration or to not meet the age criteria. These beneficiaries are provided with assistance from 3 to 6 months period being continuously supported by a professional staff who will mentor their needs.

The case management in distance will be an option in helping LGBTI in need beyond Streha current capacity. LGBT youth that will be supported in this project will be under constant surveillance by the followers of the cases, who will monitor the pursuit of individual development plan for each of the beneficiaries.

## Staff

**Marsida Cela**  
*Executive Director*

**Elvis Popaj**  
*Psychologist*

**Merita Kaca**  
*Social Worker*

**Edlira Mara**  
*Outreach Officer*

**Stivi Shehu**  
*Caretaker*

**Esmeralda Kumanaku**  
*Caretaker*

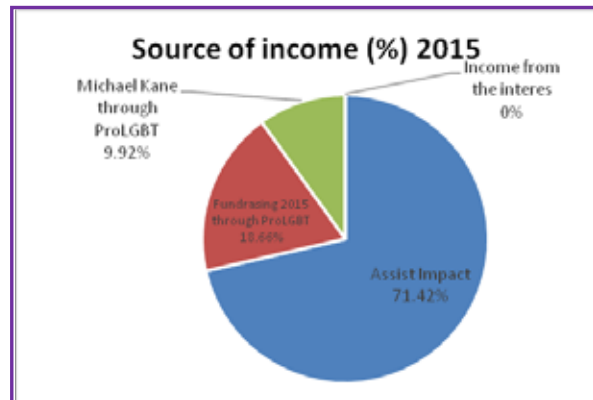
**Xhesi Demishago**  
*Finance and Admin Officer*

**Dalila Davidhi**  
*Caretaker*

# Financial Overview 2015

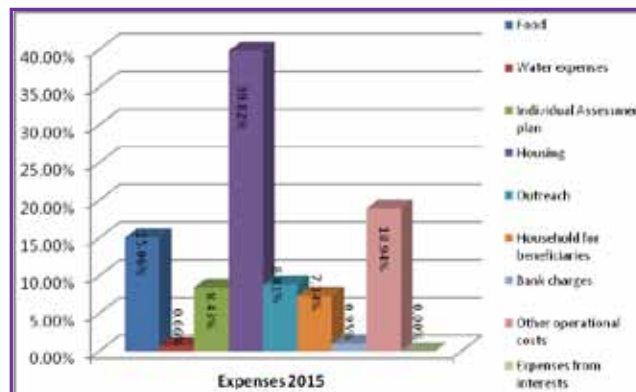
## Source of income 2015

No	Source of income 2015	Amount (%)
1	Assist Impact	71.42%
2	Fundraising 2015 through ProLGBT	18.66%
3	Michael Kane through ProLGBT	9.92%
4	Income from interests	0.00%



## Expenses 2015

No	Expenses 2015	Amount (%)
1	Food	15.06%
2	Water expenses	0.66%
3	Individual Assessment plan	8.43%
4	Housing	39.82%
5	Outreach	8.81%
6	Household for beneficiaries	7.34%
7	Bank charges	0.95%
8	Other operational costs	18.94%
9	Expenses from interests	0.00%

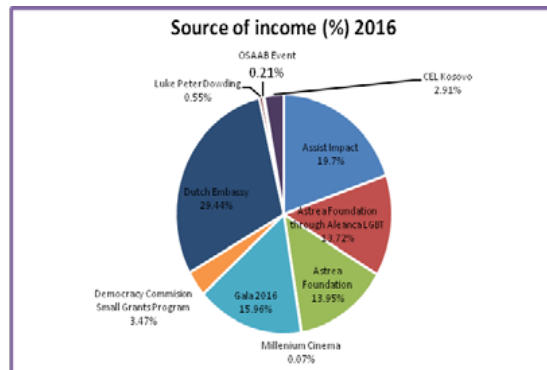


**Note:** Other operational costs include communication costs, office supplies and administrative costs

# Financial Overview 2016

## Source of income 2016

No	Source of income 2016	Amount (%)
1	Assist Impact	19.70%
2	Astrea Foundation through Aleanca LGBT	13.72%
3	Astrea Foundation	13.95%
4	Millenium Cinema	0.07%
5	Gala 2016	15.96%
6	Democracy Commision Small Grants Program	3.47%
7	Dutch Embassy	29.44%
8	Luke Peter Dowding	0.55%
9	OSAAB Event	0.21%
10	CEL Kosovo	2.91%



## Expenses 2016

**Note:** Other operational costs include training for staff on National standards of social services, staff retreat for preparatiopnal of operational manual, financial software administrative costs, municipality tax, bank charges, amortization of computer and office equipment, publication costs and fundraising expenses.

No	Expenses 2016	Amount (%)
1	Food	10.75%
2	Household for beneficiaries	1.81%
3	Housing	10.20%
4	Individual Assessment plan	4.98%
5	Medical Assistance	8.14%
6	Social Counselling	6.44%
7	Vocational Education service	7.22%
8	Life Skills and social education	7.65%
9	Negotiation for job and employment	12.49%
10	Career Counselling	4.46%
11	Psychological support	5.13%
12	Art Therapy	4.03%
13	Legal support	2.44%
14	Outreach	2.31%
15	Other operational costs	11.95%



