



## MamiCare Albania Concept Note

### 1. Project Description

Thanks to social media, Albanian women are confronted with a wealth of information about pregnancy and birth. Even so, it often does not make it any easier to distinguish important from unimportant, evidence-based from non-evidence-based. They often feel insecure, no longer able to trust their instincts when dealing with their baby, and lost in a sea of advice and information. Previously, the older or more experienced family members were this support, but today this support system no longer works for most new moms.

**Thus, there is a great need to come alongside and support and educate mothers, equipping them with the tools and knowledge they need to care for themselves and their babies.** Routine visits to the doctor during pregnancy and after birth are carried out, but there is no time for questions, worries and uncertainty in this context. A study carried out during the years of the Covid-19 pandemic found that 17.6% of Albanian women reported having postpartum depression.<sup>1</sup> Albanian mothers have the need for knowledgeable, personal, and compassionate care.

**The majority of our home visit requests have to do with difficulties mothers are experiencing with establishing breastfeeding.** Although the health benefits of breastfeeding are well-documented and supported by scientific evidence, in Albania, only 57% of babies were breastfed within the first hour of life, according to Albania Demographic Health Survey 2017-18,<sup>2</sup> and only 37% of babies under 6 months were exclusively breastfed.<sup>3</sup> The majority of midwives in hospitals do not provide adequate support when starting breastfeeding due to payments from pharmaceutical companies. Breast milk substitute (formula) is fed to newborns without reflection and across the board, even if women don't actually want it, costing young families a lot of money and causing great frustration and high failure in establishing breastfeeding.

MamiCare Albania [www.mamicare.al](http://www.mamicare.al) is a project housed under the umbrella of the Mother and Child Hospital Foundation [www.fsnf.org](http://www.fsnf.org) in Tirana, Albania that aims to come alongside new parents, **being physically present through home-visits in the period before and after birth.** At present, the Albanian government, although mandated to do home visits, has not been able to mobilize its resources to meet his need. In addition, Mamicare offers the only in-person prenatal classes in Albania, and as such, meets a need currently not met in the market.

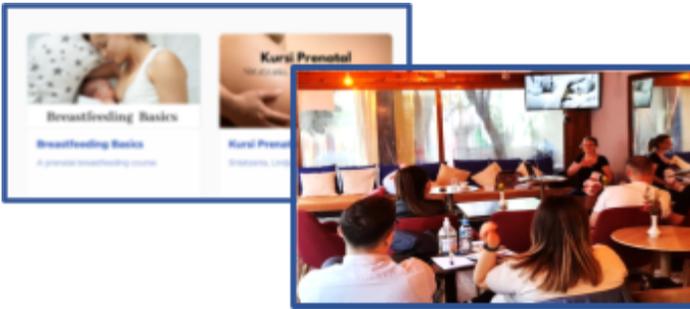
Our project is seeking partners to contribute toward a total of \$15,000 to help us finish our online courses, grow our educational awareness marketing campaign, confidently hire a part-time Albanian nurse/midwife and cover a portion of our administrative costs. **We project that Mamicare will be financially self-sustaining and will reach at least 2500 mothers with its services within three years.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://exit.al/en/covid-exacerbates-postpartum-depression-in-albania/>

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF. 2019. *Why family-friendly policies are critical to increasing breastfeeding rates worldwide*

<sup>3</sup> [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.BFED.ZS?locations=AL\[3\]](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.BFED.ZS?locations=AL[3])  
<https://exit.al/en/covid-exacerbates-postpartum-depression-in-albania/>



The first branch of MamiCare is focused on educating parents through **online and in-person prenatal courses**. We also teach **first aid courses for parents**. Our online courses reach the greater Albanian diaspora by providing evidence-based content in the Albanian language.

The second branch of MamiCare is focused on **postpartum support**. We have International Board-Certified Lactation Consultants on our staff as well as a midwife who both provide online and in-home visits to help moms with breastfeeding and new baby care. At this time, we are also able to go to the maternity hospital and offer support to moms in hospital for breastfeeding help.



Finally, MamiCare focuses on providing free resources for the community through our **educational social media posts**. We have a following of 13.8K on Instagram which has helped us connect with a much greater population. Being a social enterprise, MamiCare works closely together with The Mother and Child Hospital Foundation to make maternal and new baby care in Albania better starting at the maternity ward.

## 2. Key Target Audience

Our target audience is new mothers in Albania as well as the nearly 1.4 million Albanian citizens outside of Albania in countries such as in Kosovo, Italy, Germany, and Greece. We also have an English online breastfeeding course and help many expats in Albania. However, our focus is Albanian mothers.

## 3. Summary of Key Services

### Prenatal Classes

- 4-hour prenatal course that covers: birth, bathing baby, postpartum, and breastfeeding
- Prenatal Online Class
- Breastfeeding Online Class (Albanian and English)
- First Aid courses for parents or caretakers of the very young

### Home visit support

- Home visits in Tirana providing breastfeeding support and care for mother and baby
- Online lactation consults
- Free support at the maternity hospital
- Breast pump rentals and supplies in a small store



#### 4. Project Goals and Expected Results

The goal of MamiCare is to:

- Ensure that every Albanian family has access to high quality and compassionate prenatal and breastfeeding support.
- Increase breastfeeding success rates in Albania.
- Long-term goal is to change the culture around birth in Albania, so the women is the priority in terms of how care is delivered.

#### 5. Project's unique value and competitive advantage

- **Trustworthiness.** We have a good reputation in the community and long-term partnerships formed over the last 10 years through the foundation. We are known to provide compassionate care in a fair way.
- **Great need.** Country wide, few people are working to support mothers with education and lactation resources. Every new mom has questions and needs personalized support to help her feel confident and prepared.
- **Growing social media following.** We have a large and growing audience that can follow our new projects and grow with us.
- **Evidence-based protocols.** We use evidence-based care recommendations that are up to date. The world of breastfeeding is filled with misinformation, so providing moms with the latest research and recommendations is unique.

#### 6. Our Staff



**Elizabeth Grezda** is our **executive director**. Lizzy is passionate to see each mother and baby receive the same excellent quality care she received while delivering her three babies at Queen Geraldine hospital. She has been the director of the Mother and Child Hospital Foundation for two years and chaired the board for 8 years previous to that.

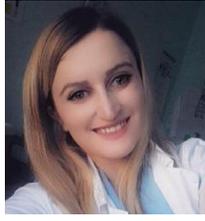
**Anne Kretschmer** is a German **midwife** who has enjoyed working with the Mother and Child Hospital Foundation and MamiCare since 2019. She has been a huge asset to the daily operations of the foundation and has been involved in teaching birth classes in public and private hospitals as well as prenatal classes. She uses her clinical skills to help moms at the state hospital with breastfeeding and does regular home visits. She is gifted at supporting women in this special stage of life.



**Gail Lilo** is one of only two Internationally qualified **lactation consultants** in Albania. Gail has walked alongside mothers who are preparing for birth and have just given birth for many years now. Her extensive experience and clinical skills will be a great asset to Mamicare as we seek to care for some of the more challenging breastfeeding cases. Gail and her husband Doni are church planters serving in the Southeastern region of Albania and so Gail will do home consults in that area and online consults.



**Bethany Lame,** (*Nurse/Lactation consultant*) has managed Mamicare and built course material and sustainable structures for managing client care and fundraising. *Currently on maternity leave.*



**Greta Mërtiri,** (*Midwife, Trainer*) works at the largest University Hospital for Mothers and Babies and produces educational social media content related to pregnancy and birth.



**Dr. Sosela Rrusho,** (*family doctor, First Aid trainer*) has a decade of extensive work with family medicine in a primary care clinic, and with Medical Students.

## 7. Preparatory work

In many ways, this is the third phase of MamiCare. The first phase was a center, opened in 2019, focused on prenatal classes and building community for moms. The center was closed in early 2021 due to the COVID restrictions and the difficulty of in-person classes. In late 2021, the core team re-launched MamiCare to focus on doing home visits and providing lactation support, and relying on rented spaces and online for any classes.

In 2023, we began to dream of expanding and growing MamiCare's services. There is a great need for support for new moms, but few know about our services as we have not been able to invest in marketing. We are now hoping to launch MamiCare 3.0 that will focus on growing in the following ways over the next 3-5 years:

- **Marketing.** We want to expand our marketing efforts to work to reach more moms. We plan to increase our advertising efforts through ads, brochures, Instagram boosting and networking. We would like to create some ads for the local Christian radio station as well.
- **Staff.** We plan to hire an Albanian nurse or midwife who will be trained to work with us. She will provide home visits for lactation help and help translate and write materials. She will also teach our prenatal and first aid courses. In the long term we would like to have a team of nurses or midwives in all the major cities of Albania.

## 8. Risks and opportunities

### Opportunities

- more mothers will get the help they need to thrive and feel supported in motherhood.
- the services we provide would be a channel where people connect to Christians and find support physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
- partnership with like-minded volunteers, missionaries, and Christian organizations who seek practical ways to reach families.

### Risks:

- **Financial stability.** Currently, we are still in a start-up phase and not self-sustainable. We will need to raise funds and rely on grants for the first 3 years and possibly longer. We have identified staff that can focus on fundraising. Not every woman will need or want to pay for a lactation consult, but we do think that we can be self-sustainable if even a small percentage of new moms use our services.
- **Staff turnover.** Albania is a less secure place to live and work and medical staff especially are drawn to more secure countries to work and raise their families. We have seen much turnover, but God has marvelously provided all of our needs at each step.



## 9. Project timeline

**PHASE 1:** Focus on marketing (Fall 2023-Fall 2024)

- Increase our online prenatal class and home visit numbers through advertising and more strategic marketing.

**PHASE 2:** Hire/Train a full time Albanian Midwife and manager (Spring 2024)

**PHASE 3:** Slowly scale up to reach more mothers in Tirana and in other cities through strategic part-time hires in further, or less-served areas.

## 10. Envisaged impact

One of the most transformational seasons of life is when a family welcomes a baby into their lives. At MamiCare, we model and provide compassionate support to new mothers and fathers with the goal of helping them flourish during this monumental transition. When women are empowered, the whole society benefits. MamiCare projects that it will reach 550+ women directly in year 1, 850 in year 2, and 1000+ in its third year.

## 11. Financial Need and How to Join

Our project is looking for partners to contribute a total of \$15,000 , spread out over the first three years to help us finish our online courses, grow our educational awareness marketing campaign, hire a part-time Albanian nurse/midwife and cover some of our administrative costs. In three years MamiCare should be self-sustaining.

A tax-deductible giving channel has been created through Globalgiving at this link.

<https://globalgiving.org/projects/home-help-for-mothers-and-newborns-in-albania>



## 12. Budget/ financial plan

<b>MamiCare Financial Projections over 4 years</b>				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
<b>Expenses</b>				
Sub Total Salaries	\$14,460	\$22,479	\$23,553	\$24,627
Subtotal Operational Expenses	\$5,243	\$5,718	\$6,408	\$5,709
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$19,703</b>	<b>\$28,197</b>	<b>\$29,961</b>	<b>\$30,336</b>
<b>Income</b>				
Subtotal Sales	\$14,570	\$21,710	\$27,240	\$31,680
Fundraising Drive	\$5,500	\$6,500	\$3,000	0
Reserves from previous year		\$367	\$380	\$659
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$20,070</b>	<b>\$28,577</b>	<b>\$30,362</b>	<b>\$32,732</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>\$367</b>	<b>\$32</b>	<b>\$512</b>	<b>\$2,930</b>
<b>Impact</b>				
<b>Mothers Reached with Services</b>	545	845	1091	1320
mothers served per \$10 donated	1.0	1.3	3.6	
cost to donor per mother served	\$10	\$8	\$3	

For a detailed version of this summary, please click on this link to this [Google Document](#).