

“Miresia” Factory

Since January 1996, the Albanian Disability Rights Foundation has functioned as a lead agency in the establishment, organization, management and financial administration of the “Miresia” factory, which is the first and currently the only service for the production and distribution of wheelchairs in Albania, implementing in this way one of the main rules of the UN, that of the equipment of persons with disabilities with mobility aids.

“Miresia” Factory Project launched its activity in response to the requests of NGOs operating in the field of disability, which had identified the need for this service. It was very difficult to find such wheelchairs before the project started.

Production service of “Miresia” wheelchairs was established by the OXFAM Disability Unit (now Albanian Disability Rights Foundation) in collaboration with a Motivation UK, a british agency specialized in the design and manufacture of wheelchairs for the developing countries.

The staff of the manufacture was fully trained regarding the design technical aspects and the production by the international staff of Motivation, during the start up period of the Miresia wheelchair workshop, in February - November 1996.

The factory is totally run and managed by local staff.

The staff consists of 7 technicians, 5 out of them persons with disabilities and 2 wheelchair users.

The production of wheelchairs and other assistive devices in the factory is made in compliance with the individual needs of persons with disabilities, according to age groups and according to the conditions of Albania by offering also repair service. As such they are unique and vary from the equipments coming occasionally to Albania in the framework of the humanitarian aid. It is an obligation of the Albanian state structures to assess this contrast, giving priority to the production activity of the mobility aids in the country and social projects that enable the multifaceted needs fulfillment of persons with disabilities in Albania. 3500 wheelchairs have been produced and distributed in the “Miresia” factory.

Beneficiary of “ Miresia ” mobility aids are people with disabilities from all over the country, registered on the waiting list at the Albanian Disability Rights Foundation.

The needs of the persons with disabilities for mobility aids are identified mainly through:

-The regional offices of economic assistance and social services which ADRF cooperates with, for the identification, evaluation and distribution of wheelchairs in the relevant regions.

-Albanian and international organizations, members of ADRF networks.

-The daily service of free legal aid and counseling at ADRF.

- Clients who are familiar with the activity of the factory through the information and programs in media.

Persons with disabilities who are provided with wheelchairs are also offered

ADRF information, publications as well as basic technical and medical orientation on wheelchair usage.

NUON - Basic Investment to increase the sustainability of “Miresia” Factory

NUON (Netherlands) is a Dutch company known as a utility company distributor of electricity, contacting ADRF through ADRF major donor NOVIB- Oxfam The Netherlands. Having evaluated the activity conducted in the Miresia Workshop, as a project that provides service for persons with disabilities, mobility aids like wheelchairs and other assistive devices for them, also as a project that offers direct employment opportunity to them, NUON offered financial support to improve working conditions of the workers, constructing a new building "Miresia" factory in 2004 and invested in the improvement of the production technology of the mobility means.

NUON revenues for "Miresia" factory are provided by the workers' contribution of this company, who have provided the incomes from the work on holidays with the logo "One day of ours, your future." In order to realize these contributions, campaigns are organized by the workers of this company for the situation of persons with disabilities, the service offered through "Miresia" factory of ADRF, continuous contacts have been kept by conducting visits and exchange of information, comparing similar experiences with Netherlands and different possible strategies have been drafted towards the sustainability of a successful program.