

# **Annual Report 2020**

## Forward

Every year, we stop and discern upon the work YMCA Malta has carried out in the previous year. 'Discernment' is a crucial internal process as it serves as an opportunity to look back and evaluate the ongoing services, the short-term projects and the strategic plans to continue our fight for social justice.

2020 marked the ending of a 5-year strategic plan that operated and guided the YMCA movement in Malta between 2016 and 2020. This strategic plan gave direction to implement the large scale operations carefully. It directed the course of action towards several improvements and necessary changes required for the development of our organisation, a process based on intertwined values of consolidation, change, professionalism, and long-term sustainability.

This annual report casts an overview of the work carried out over the past year while also marking the end process of the now consolidated pillars in our services to the community. At the beginning of 2020, over 50 members of YMCA Malta were presented with the evaluation of what this long process has achieved and the final touches to be able to end this plan successfully. During the same meeting, 'Towards 2025' was presented, proposed and voted for by all members. Another exciting 5-year strategy plan awaits the YMCA movement to keep engaging the community, create safe spaces for youths, provide equal access to education, housing and employment, fight injustices, alleviate the risks of poverty, and support those who need it the most.

Once again, this annual report also serves as a means to express our gratitude towards those who provided financial support, such as companies, private enterprises, government agencies and ministries, individuals that provided us with monetary and other types of donations from which our service-users benefitted. 2020 was a year of hardships and financial struggles that were brought on us by COVID-19 pandemic. Several fundraising events were initially postponed and thereafter cancelled.

However, the support we found from the team itself, especially the front-liners, kept us truly going without withering, growing stronger as a movement that is alive. After all, being a movement for young people, hope, possibilities, and belief in change never ceased. Whilst we continue to stand by youth empowerment, and for youth empowerment, I remind you of the youthful spirit within us all.

Anthony Camilleri  
YMCA Malta CEO & NGS

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## **1. About YMCA Malta**

YMCA is a worldwide youth organisation with more than 64 beneficiaries in 120 different countries. It was founded in England in 1844 during the Industrial Revolution to assist young people in developing a healthy body, mind, and spirit on the foundations of Christian principles. In fact, this is why the YMCAs all over the world have the symbol of the triangle, which symbolises that a healthy body and mind lead to a healthy spirit.

It is well known that the British YMCA was also present in Malta specifically geared to serve the military forces stationed in Malta during the war. However, this activity stopped when Malta became independent in 1964. The Maltese YMCA movement started its work in 1976. The early days of YMCA Malta were concentrated around a small coffee bar (the Imperial Cafe in Valletta) which also doubled as a meeting point for young people. Up until 1988, the main activities consisted of organising rock concerts, visiting patients in hospital, Christmas parties for children and conducting street patrols to assist young people with addictions off the street. The latter led to good cooperation and relationship with the police, who were appreciative of this work.

The National Council was established in 1989 to improve and consolidate on the previous work and explore new areas of operations. The EAY, the Scottish YMCA and the Swiss parish of Wil provided the initial funding. In the beginning, four YMCAs were formed in Malta whereby international youth exchanges, English language courses, literacy programmes, suicide helpline, canoeing, first aid courses, street theatre, tensing, counselling and providing homeless shelters were the first community work carried out by the Maltese YMCA.

In 1997 YMCA Malta received the 'Għarfien Nazzjonali - Żgħirażagħħ fis-Soċjeta' Award by Hon. Not. Joe Cilia Permanent Secretary for Young People, Culture and Art. In 2018, YMCA Malta won the Team of the Year Award presented by Hon. Dr Helena Dalli within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Equality. Within the same year, YMCA Malta was also awarded First-Runner Up in the EPALE Awards 2018 by the Hon. Evarist Bartolo Minister for Education and Employment.

As a nonprofit and voluntary organisation YMCA keeps striving to promote a vision of a more just society while supporting the positive development of youths as a preventive measure and offering a spectrum of social work services to individuals who are underprivileged or socially disadvantaged. The specialisation in this regard is the support, assistance, and reintegration of the homeless in Malta. Amongst several activities designed to foster the spiritual, intellectual, social and physical wellbeing of the community, YMCA takes an active part in cultural, environmental, artistic, musical, audio-visual and forms of activities.

## **2. YMCA Malta's Actions during COVID-19**

2020 was a challenging year for everyone. The lives of many people have been turned upside down. Despite many efforts, many people lost their livelihoods and even their homes. Despite everything going online, children missed out on their education and all the positive experiences related to schooling. Many parents became teachers, and many of our community members lost their loved ones. Everyone had to make many sacrifices and adapt to a new life while not knowing what to expect or when things would go back to 'normal'.

Seeing the impact the global pandemic was having on the local community, YMCA Malta immediately jumped into action to do its part to mitigate and alleviate the negative repercussions. For this reason, YMCA Malta has launched several projects and initiatives to assist those who required support and to ease the impact of COVID-19.

Throughout the whole world YMCAs acted to alleviate COVID-19 pandemic. 'Resilience' has been YMCAs watchword in facing hardships, and 'Reimagination' in going forward stronger, better and more focused. COVID-19 work ranged from supporting the communities, to rallying round one another as National YMCAs, to global advocacy to rethinking our purpose and practices.

Between April and September 2020 YMCA Europe conducted a survey across 41 YMCA National Movements and 75 Local YMCAs in Europe, Asia, Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean which revealed how income levels dramatically went down, programmes were reduced, staff positions and salaries cut and external partnerships kept on hold. 20% of the National Movements and 20% of the local YMCAs had lost over 75% of their income. 50% of National Movements stated their fear of not surviving if the crisis continues.

A process of 'resilience' by the World YMCA, bringing together the 'Big 6'; the world's leading youth empowerment organisation, including the YMCA, continued to show a global voice in the COVID-19 response. In April 2021, the WHO Executive Director Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus recorded a video message for the Leaders Talks where he thanked YMCA for its' work in supporting the community COVID-19 response around the globe.

The process of 'Reimagination' brought findings that will shape the World YMCA's collective vision of its future, in the form of its 'North Star' as it approaches its 200th Anniversary in 2044. The reimagination, coupled with the recovery based on resilience, started in 2020 and will be at the core of World YMCA's next strategy for the period between 2022-2026, to be approved at the World Council in Aarhus, Denmark, in July 2022. YMCA Malta National General Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Anthony Camilleri, has been appointed as a representative on the 'North Star' Committee.

In the following section a brief report on actions carried out locally by YMCA Malta during COVID-19 outbreak is recorded:

### **a. At Home Together**

On 6th May 2020 YMCA Malta launched the 'At Home Together' a weekly series of online webinars published on social media which tackled various subjects such as boredom, time management, relationships, or home space organisation which were all subjects directly related to COVID-19. YMCA would like to thank various professionals that joined these online discussions that aimed at linking the community that were during the first phase of partial lockdown inside their homes with interesting topics.

'Fighting Boredom' brought online a discussion between Gabriele Bertone (YMCA Malta's Youth Empowerment Coordinator), Matthew Bartolo (Counsellor and Psychotherapist specializing in sex and relationships and Founding Partner of Willingness), Danica Falzon (ex-YMCA Key-Worker, Trainee Health Psychologists, Partner and Health Clinic Manager of Willingness) and Nicola Falzon ( ex-YMCA Key-Worker, Psychology Officer, Partner and Sex Clinic Manager of Willingness).

'Fostering Relationships' was another online webinar discussion between Anthony Camilleri (YMCA Malta's Chief Executive Officer, National General Secretary) and also Psychotherapists focusing on couples and relationships; Anita Portelli (Counsellor and Psychotherapist at Rituals Malta) and Shirley Galea Riana (Psychotherapist at Listenin to You).

'Time Management' was the third webinar which was brought by Dorianne Rotin (YMCA Malta's Counsellor and Wellbeing Programme Coordinator), Joel Farrugia a volunteer at YMCA's Youth Empowerment Programme and also Leszek Soltysik an expert in Development of Business Strategy and Risk Management.

'Home Space Organisation' was also carefully chosen as a topic considering that the public was also now spending more time inside their homes. This was a discussion facilitated between Anthony Camilleri, YMCA's Chief Executive Officer, National General Secretary and Psychotherapist, Iwona Soltysik YMCA's Social Business Coordinator and Sarah Xiberras YMCA's Head of Home at 'Dar Niki Cassar'.

'Parenting and Conflict Resolution' discussion online webinar was facilitated by Dorothy Scicluna (YMCA Malta's Administration Officer and also a mother of one), Julian Holland (YMCA Malta's Fundraising Officer and father of three) and Demaris Agius (a mother of two).

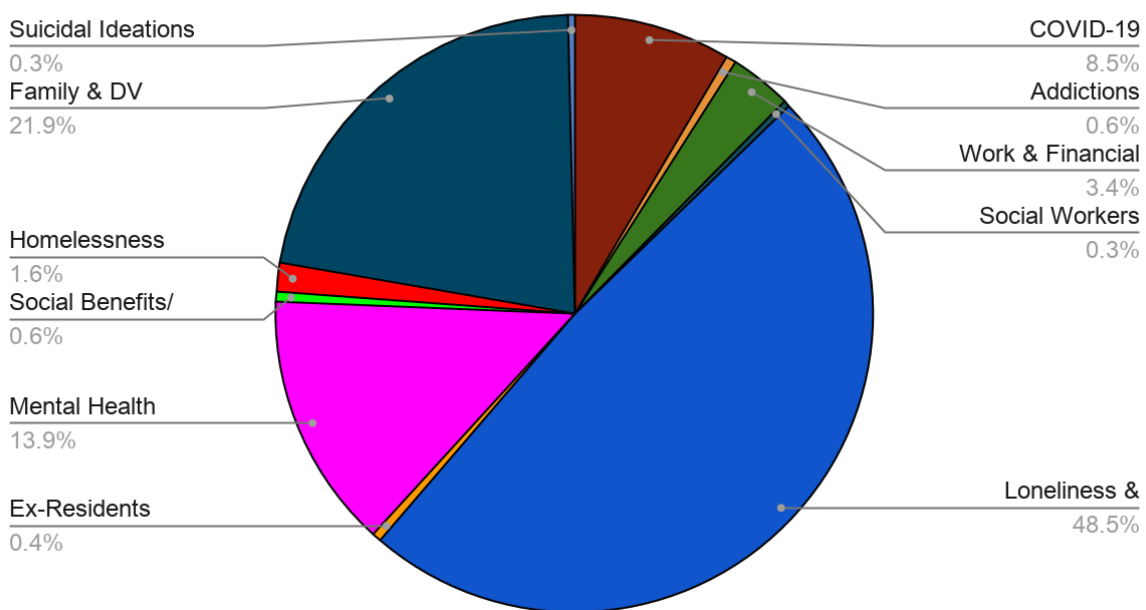
'Sharing Narratives' was the last webinar in the series 'At Home Together', and it was conducted by Gwen Viard (YMCA Malta's Youth Facility Officer), Sharon Cusens (Spring International Productions, Founder), Asha Thea (Psychotherapist) and Sarah Doublesin (Psychotherapist).

In this final webinar, YMCA Malta and Spring International Productions launched a Facebook Group - E-Motion Channel which connects individuals in the community in their sharing of successful stories amidst the difficulties that COVID-19 brought in the personal lives of many.

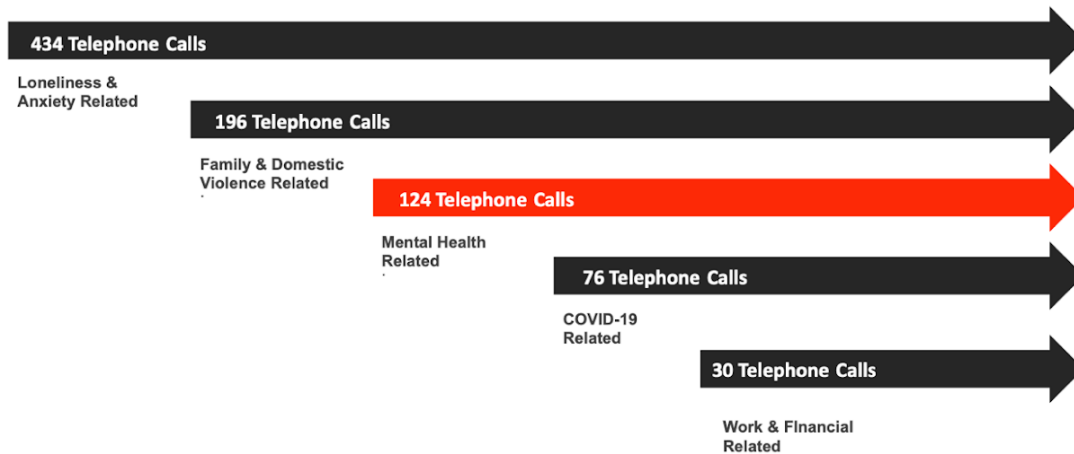
## b. Loneliness Response Line

The 'Loneliness Response Line' (LRL) was launched on 23 March 2020 as a direct response to the loneliness and solitude symptoms that arose from the social alienation due to the social prevention measures imposed by the local authorities to prevent or at least slow down the infection rate. The aim of this helpline was and still is for YMCA Malta's support team to offer support calls to those who needed assistance in these difficult times. When necessary, the persons who called the support line were referred to YMCA Malta's psychotherapeutic services' counsellors & psychotherapists. Between March and December 2020, YMCA Malta intervened on 903 calls on the LRL.

### Issues



# LRL 2020: 903 Telephone Calls



## c. Never Alone Campaign

Through the LRL at the end of 2020 beginning of 2021 YMCA Malta launched the 'Never Alone Campaign' whereby 32 elderly houses were contacted and their service-users made aware of the LRL with the message that '*they are not alone*'. This initiative supported those elderly people that had no support and/or families to be with them through the festive season so as to not end the year on their own. Throughout such a festive period another 30 telephone interventions were carried out to support those elderly that felt they were on their own.

## d. Never an Empty Plate

YMCA Malta does not only provide temporary accommodation to those who are homeless. We offer a holistic service to our residents and those who live in their own homes and experience poverty. This means that, apart from individualised care programmes, YMCA Malta provides food, toiletries, and household goods to our service-users through the "Needs Support Programme" (NSP), which was also an initiative that started in 2020.

During this campaign that was also part of YMCA Malta's actions during COVID-19 several companies, organisations, schools, and churches encourage their employees, students, congregations and so forth to donate food items, toiletries or household goods to the NSP during a particular month. The items collected were re-distributed to those in need, both living in YMCA's residential facility and community.

In line with the values promoted within YMCA's residential programme, the NSP is based on individualisation. Although many benefit from raw ingredients to cook with, other situations may require the provision of ready meals. New parents may require nappies for their babies. Detergents and toiletries may be deemed equally important. In our experience, some people



living in poverty often lack the means to cook food, which will also be factored into items provided. The NSP was phased initially by numerous calls and home visits to individuals and families that may be at risk of homelessness. After assessment of their needs and how YMCA could support them, NSP was born. This included also providing food donations to a number of ex-residents, individuals and families that were struggling. The NSP service was amplified during COVID-19 pandemic to prevent people from becoming homeless. The YMCA Residential team coordinated and arranged delivery for over 125 donations of food, detergents and home supplies. These donations helped to remain stocked with 3 food stores all year, helping also our residents to save money during the pandemic.

#### **e. Platform Against Homelessness**

In a bid to eradicate homelessness and tackle the struggles that service users encounter, YMCA Malta created and chairs the Platform Against Homelessness. This Platform brought together 22 different NGOs and stakeholders in 2020 including the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights, the Ministry for Social Accommodation, Public Health Services, Mount Carmel Hospital, Archdiocese of Malta and Social Care Standards Authority Malta. Through this Platform, YMCA Malta in 2020 liaised and brought together various government entities and organisations to bring about change where needed.

Also from a ground of prevention work, YMCA carried out several lectures at the University of Malta and carried out an awareness agreement with Campus FM for 2021 to carry out several radio talks on the work we do.

#### **f. Y Communal Home**

When COVID-19 hit the Maltese islands, YMCA Malta felt the need to be proactive and open its second semi-independent shelter providing 'Program Kisbet Serġan'. The purpose of this new shelter was and still is so that families that were directly hit with financial difficulties, renting problems, and loss of employment could be hosted and thus avoid situations of families ending up roofless.

At the Y Communal Home (YCH) in Msida, YMCA Malta provides communal accommodation to individuals and families in a bid to reduce loneliness, encourage independent living and eradicate homelessness. This house caters for up to 14 individuals living semi-independently whilst benefiting from constant support from the residential team. Throughout 2020, YMCA Malta gave 2,751 bed nights to families and children throughout this new accommodation service. Unlike, 'Dar Niki Cassar' this house is a semi-independent living whereby the families live on their own without 24 hour surveillance of staff and/or volunteers. 'Program Kisbet Serġan' then still provides them with daily routine visits, individual support by their assigned support worker, care-plan and psychological support.

The property now operating as YCH was in 2019 operating as a Youth Hostel that gave 955 bed nights during the last quarter of 2019. However due to COVID-19 this operation had to stop which also had its impact financially on YMCA.

**g. The Maltese YMCA Prayer during Hardships**

YMCA Europe asked YMCA Malta to open its' Annual General Assembly in 2020 by sharing the good practices carried out by YMCA Malta in response to COVID-19 - the same practices which are showcased in this first part of this Annual Report. Unlike previous years, in 2020 the General Assembly had to take place online.

YMCA Malta also launched the Maltese YMCA prayer during hardships:

At times like COVID-19  
When hope and vision are lost,  
We thank you for the YMCA.  
We pray that our vision restores HOPE.

To unite us all in God's love . . .

While across the world we work  
When trouble and injustice is fought,  
We thank you for the YMCA.  
For development of spirit, body, mind is brought.

To unite all in God's love . . .

When we look around and watch,  
When the young walk away and many die,  
We thank you for the YMCA.  
For vision and faith here are amplified.

To unite all in God's love . . .

We pray . . .  
We pray . . .  
For all the YMCAs  
Across the world we pray.

Amen

**h. 'Let the Sunshine In...'**

'Let the Sunshine In...' was a series of another 17 webinars organised by YMCA Malta in collaboration with Listenin to You. During these webinars, several qualified and accredited professionals discussed various topics related to mental health and wellbeing.

- a. The Stages of Life: Anthony Camilleri - Psychotherapist, Shirley Galea Riani - Psychotherapist & Alexandra Xuereb also a Psychotherapist.
- b. Guilt Tripping - An Attempt at Control: Shirley Galea Riani - Psychotherapist & William Hayman Counsellor.
- c. The IVF Journey - Walking it Together: Dorianne Rotin - Counsellor & Johanna Rizzo - FSWS Social Worker.
- d. A Couple of Individuals: Anita Portelli - Counsellor and Psychotherapist & Alexandra Xuereb - Psychotherapist
- e. The Pursuit of our own Happiness: Shirley Galea Riani & Xanthe' Schembri - both Psychotherapists.
- f. Understanding Eating Disorders & Loving Yourself in the Process: Anita Portelli - Counsellor and Psychotherapist & Isabel Jacobson - Psychotherapist
- g. The Worrying Mind - Anxiety in Children: Dorianne Rotin Counsellor & Joseph Pellicano, Caritas Malta.

### **3. Programmes**

YMCA Malta strives every year to provide targeted and individualised services, and we are able to provide such assistance through four main and inter-related programmes, that is, the Residential Services, the Youth Empowerment Programme, the Wellbeing Programme (as service-giving programmes) and the Social Business Programme (as a fundraising generating programme).

Through the Residential Services, YMCA Malta provides residential accommodation to 48 individuals and families, including children who experience homelessness, at 'Dar Niki Cassar' and 'Y Communal Home'. Having said that though, YMCA Malta does not only provide residential accommodation but it also provides an individualised care programme, provides both residential and community service-users with donations of food, clothing, and furniture, seeks funding opportunities to support homeless individuals to benefit from psychosocial educational projects, and additionally collaborates with national and international stakeholders and agencies on matters relating to 'homelessness' and 'rooflessness'.

As part of its work, YMCA Malta crosses paths with many youths who wish to actively participate in our projects, develop their skills further, or learn new skills and tools and/or wish to create their own projects. YMCA Malta provides these opportunities, many more to underprivileged and socially disadvantaged youths, through the Youth Empowerment Programme which is a youth-led youth work programme. Here, the youths will be supported, in a safe environment, through one or more of the pillars within YEP: Education, Outreach, Research, Prevention and Sustainability.

The wellbeing of our service-users is important for YMCA Malta and thus wellbeing is at the heart of all the projects and activities and thus created the Wellbeing Programme as one of the main focus areas. Thanks to the Wellbeing Programme, YMCA Malta provides free and

professional understanding and intervention in response to emotional and behavioural needs of services-users through the provision of individual and group counselling and psychotherapy sessions as part of an integrated, preventative and intervention service.

To be able to provide its different services, programmes and initiatives, YMCA Malta relies on collaborations with private enterprises and organisations and fundraising activities which are coordinated by the Social Business Programme (SBP). Furthermore, through SPB, YMCA Malta measures and monitors changes to specific dimensions of human wellbeing that do not hinder financial stability and cohesion and integrates social entrepreneurship and sustainability.

#### **4. Overview of YMCA's services and projects in 2020**

##### **a. A Tribute to Volunteering**

'A Tribute to Volunteering' was born in 2019 as an idea and was carried out as a main project, coordinated by the Youth Empowerment Programme and financed through the Small Initiatives Fund, a fund managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector. The aim of this project was to promote volunteering as an integral aspect of community life and highlighting the importance and impact which voluntary work has.

YMCA Malta, embarked on a twofold objective process to research and showcase the work carried out in the past 30 years by all those people who chose to offer their time to be actively involved in the various activities done by the YMCA in Malta, specifically during the last decades 1990 - 2020. These activities included those carried out on the various new branches that were set-up in the 1990's and each specialising area, namely the running of a homeless shelter, providing leadership training, canoeing activities, leisure activities, social services to the community, providing First Aid training, manning of a suicide telephone line, youth activities; as well as events organised from the 2000's onwards such as the Valletta Street Festivals, Awareness Campaigns, Fundraising Events, Conferences and Workshops.

Besides that 'A Tribute to Volunteering' contributed to stronger collaborations between voluntary organisations, served as a springboard for YMCA Malta and other organisations to reflect on the changes that happened during the last couple of decades in the world of voluntary work. Throughout this project a group of current YMCA volunteers undertook the initial task of research, carrying out interviews with key-people at YMCA such as volunteers, ex-board members, and staff members on the activities carried out in the past years. All material gathered such as video-interviews, photos, and other audio and visual documentation was categorised and digitized and made available for the public on YMCA's website - YMCA History Walk section.

The YMCA History Walk section presents these activities in a timely format with a brief description accompanying each activity. This page will continue to develop over the years with past and future activities as an online digital archive. The funded project came to an end with an online panel discussion with representatives from the Malta Humanist Association, Moviment Graffiti, Right to Smile, and YMCA. This discussion dwelled on topics such as the fundamental contributions to volunteering and civil societies; challenges faced by volunteers; and effective ways of how non-governmental organisations can collaborate together for the betterment of society.

#### **b. Anti-Bullying Campaign**

The 'Anti-Bullying Campaign' consisted of an online campaign which took place between the 16th and 21st November 2020 to mark the National Anti-Bullying Week 2020. It is the second consecutive year for YMCA to carry out this online campaign. This year, the campaign focused on school bullying and aimed at providing essential tools for parents, teachers, and children to better recognise and address instances of bullying and bullying behaviours, as well as guidance on how and from where to seek professional support.

#### **c. Youth Club**

Through different discussions with youths who attend our facilities in Valletta, YMCA Malta became increasingly aware that vulnerable youths lack healthy and safe spaces where they can express themselves and become active citizens. For this reason, back in 2019, YMCA Malta, funded by Star Group, undertook the necessary renovation works on the new youth space in Valletta. This funding allowed YMCA Malta to undertake the required infrastructural refurbishments needed to develop a new floor at the YMCA Head Office & Youth Facility.

In 2020, YMCA Malta applied for and was awarded the A4U grant, a grant from Aġenzija Żgħirażagħ. Through this financial assistance, YMCA Malta was able to develop this long-term project even further. This grant allowed us to furnish the YEP Space and make it a welcoming space for all young people attending for the activities. During this year, Start Group made a second financial donation towards this project thus helping YMCA Malta to acquire the remaining essential items necessary to have a one-of-a-kind multi-purpose room that can also serve as a cinema room, group activities areas, and counselling room.

#### **d. YMCA Malta Blog**

In 2020, YMCA Malta started its blog on Newsbook. The purpose of the blog is to share life experiences and stories of those amongst us who are going through a rough time in their lives, how they overcome these obstacles and to keep the community updated with YMCA's life. Thanks to these blogs, YMCA Malta continued in 2020 to raise awareness about social

issues, such as homelessness and rooflessness, youths, advocacy, mental health, wellbeing and so forth.

Over 20 stories were shared in a bid to amplify the reality of homelessness and to be true to our clients' stories which were not only promoted through the Blog but also through YMCA's social media platforms.

#### **e. What About?**

The project 'What About?' consisted of 9 online discussion groups and were conducted by youth volunteers Martina Camilleri, Glen Galea, and Giulia Bertone. These online-based discussion sessions were held between June and September 2020 for teenagers aged 11-13 and 14-16.

This project aimed to foster a safe environment that is conducive to healthy discussions for school-age teenagers. Topics of national and international interest were used as a springboard to guide these conversations. During these discussions, the participants were encouraged to express their opinions whilst being open to other group members' ideas. This method facilitated the teenagers' critical thinking abilities and collaborative learning skills.

#### **f. Leadership Academy**

The YMCA Malta has always found ways and means to promote leadership. In 2020 two young people participated in the 'YMCA Europe Leadership Academy' (YLA). The Leadership Academy was created to assist the YMCA National Movements and empower young people to take action as active citizens, equipping them with skills to promote social change and strengthen their movements as bearers of democratic values change-makers. The goal of the Leadership Academy Project is to promote the civic engagement of young people through enhancing their capacity as leaders for local communities.

The plan for YLA 2020 which also had to carry out its first workshop in Malta bringing together over 32 young leaders from all over Europe, had to be transferred online after postponing sessions several times due to COVID-19. In fact, YLA 2020 apart from taking place online had to be adjusted to continue in 2021. YMCA Malta also supported the financial needs to carry out this training thanks to the NGO Co-Financing Fund through the Malta Council for Voluntary Sector and the Ministry for Education.

#### **g. Sustainable Communities Initiative Fund**

In 2020, YMCA Malta applied for the second edition of the 'Sustainable Communities Initiative Fund' - an initiative organised by the Ministry for Social Accommodation in

collaboration with Housing Authority and funded through the Specialised Housing Programme Fund. YMCA Malta was awarded a Palazzo and €350,000 funding to be able to refurbish the latter and start providing services for homeless individuals and families over the age of 60+ and others with special needs that require a special environment.

The submitted proposal 'Y Communal Home' (YCH) by YMCA Malta came after the proposal submitted in 2019 with the name of H.O.P.E (Homeless, Opportunities, Possibilities & Employment). This project failed to pass the first edition of the competition but we continued building and working on the idea which developed itself into a separate supportive service project providing vulnerable and ex-homeless people with possibilities and opportunities, including employment with YMCA here referenced in another section.

Following COVID-19 situation in Malta the residential compartment of the proposal was based on the 1st licensed YCH launched to combat loneliness in the continuous fight to eradicate homelessness by targeting families, and their children who were unable to live independently for some reason or another couldn't be able to do it on their own or in a rented apartment. YCH integrates an evidence-based approach and vision towards alternative service-provision pathways to reach reintegration. YCH is based on the ethos of 'psychologically informed environments'. Whilst the first YCH targets service-providers that have achieved semi-independent living and fulfilled a care-programme particularly families and children the second one as aforementioned targets another specific population that needs catering for.

This project proposal was one of the four winners of the initiatives, and thus, in the near future, YMCA Malta will be running its third home.

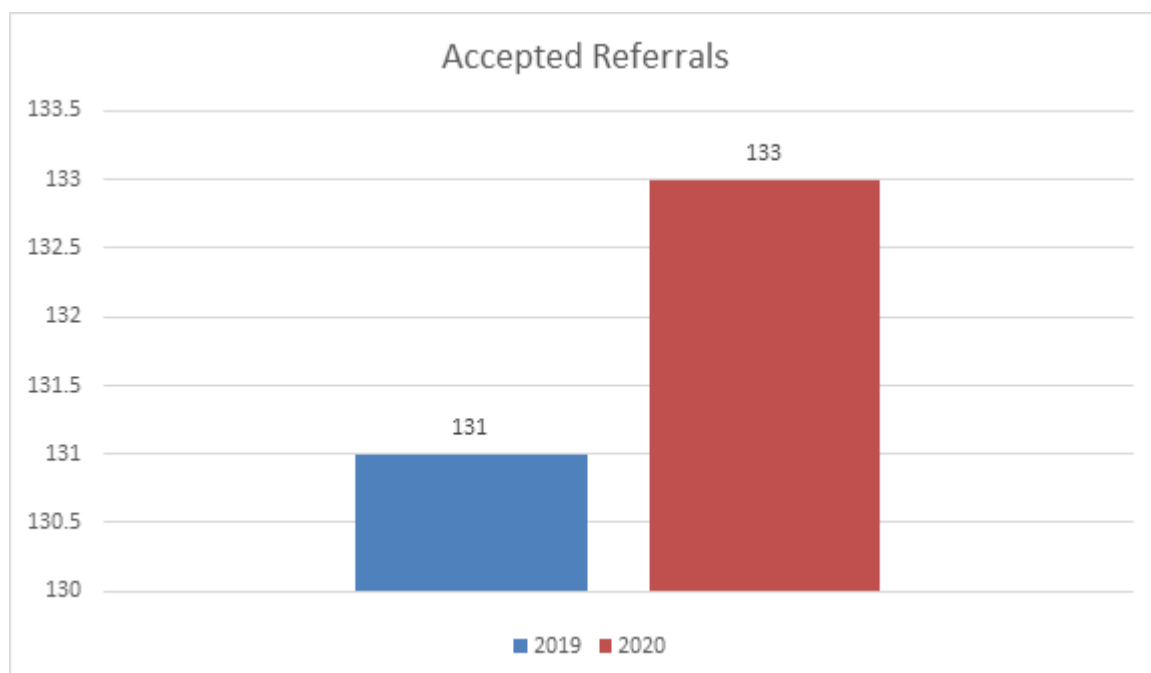
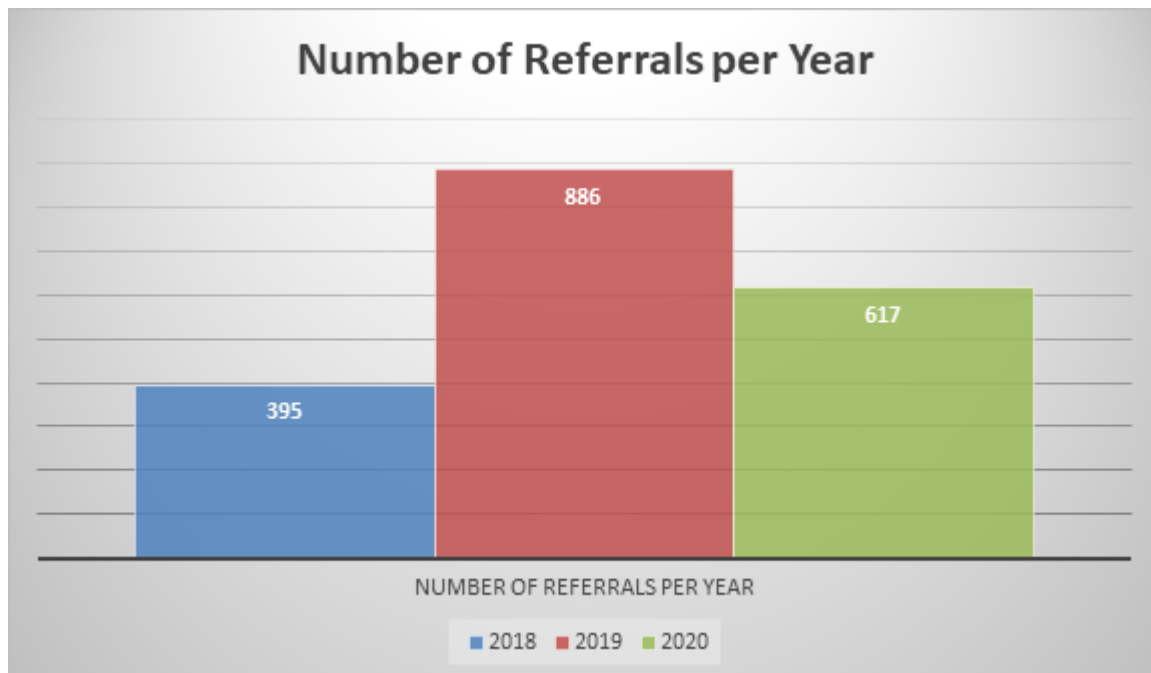
#### **h. Healthy Masculinities**

'Healthy Masculinities' was a series of workshops and outing activities aimed at adolescent boys. During these 5 sessions, the participants discussed gender roles, toxic masculinity, and respectful attitudes towards women.

#### **i. 'Dar Niki Cassar'**

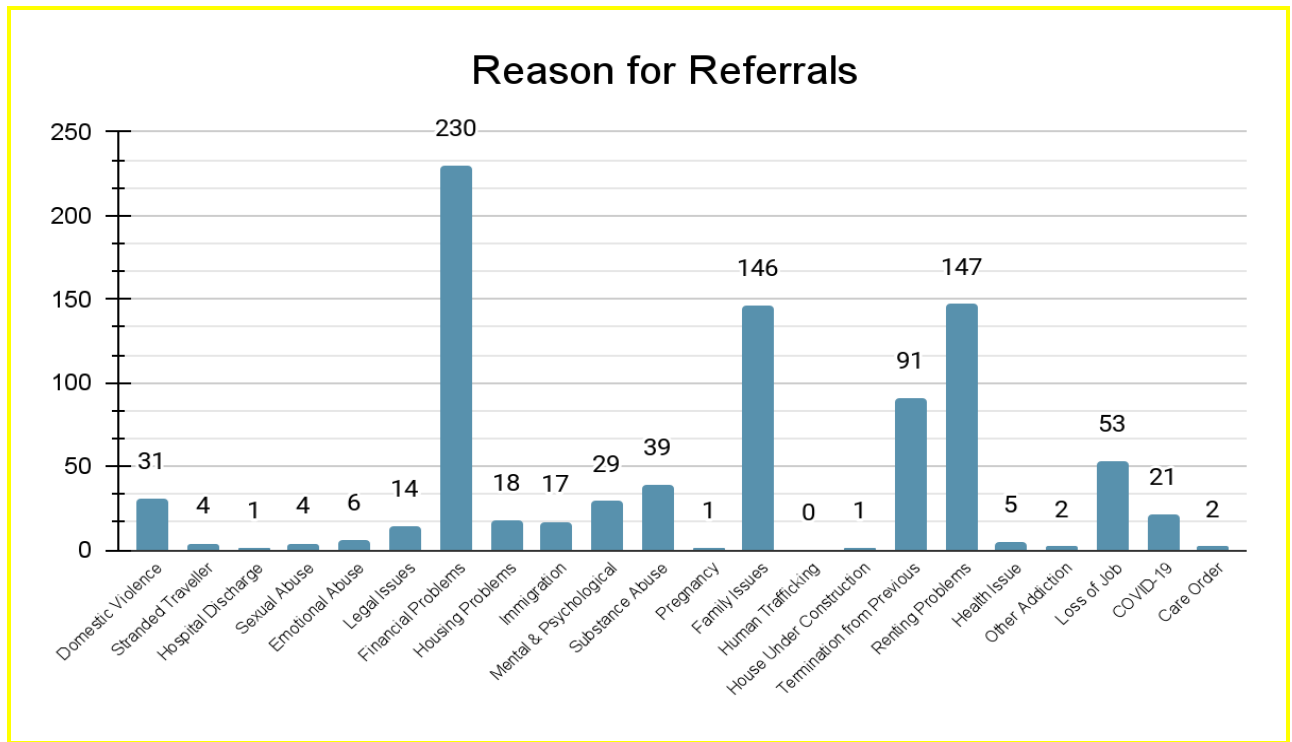
At 'Dar Niki Cassar' (DNC) YMCA provides sheltered accommodation and holistic support to vulnerable individuals and families including children experiencing homelessness. At the DNC YMCA supports up to 34 individuals at once as they prepare for independent living. YMCA works with people of all ages, genders and nationalities, where promotion of cultural humility and diversity is carried out and where people who may have become homeless for a number of reasons are supported holistically.

In 2020, YMCA had 617 cases unlike 2019 where the cases received were that of 886. In the past three years YMCA received 1,898 cases of homelessness. Due to COVID-19 restriction measures YMCA had also around 10 beds that were set up as quarantine whilst the referrals dropped one has to take into consideration also that several offices were closed and many service-users and individuals seeking support found it harder to reach out.

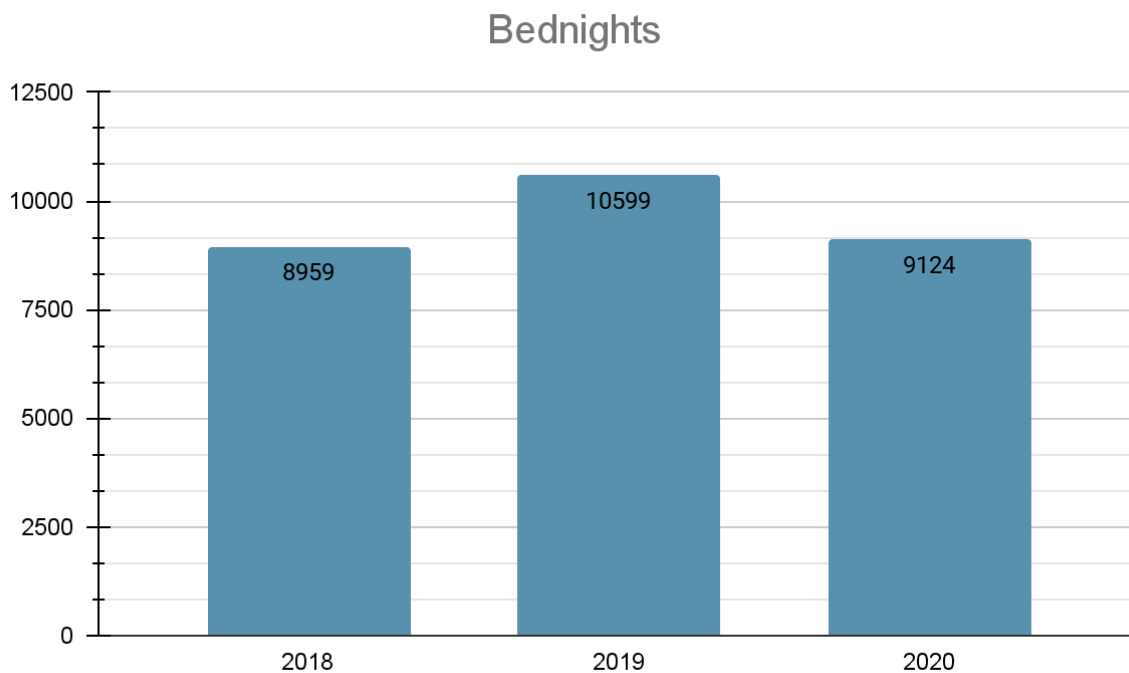




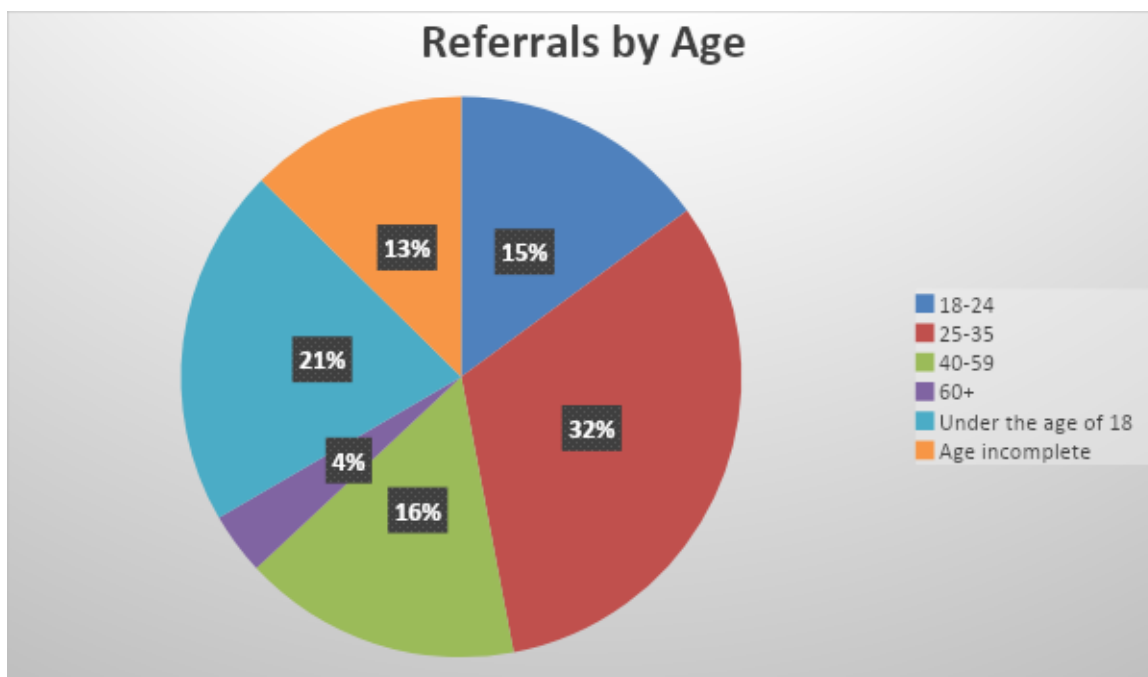
Despite that YMCA Malta received over 600 referrals YMCA was only able to support 133 in 2020. YMCA has given less bed nights in 2020 unlike in 2019. Here one also needs to take in consideration that a referral had a waiting period of two weeks prior to entering the shelter to get a swab test and quarantine period to facilitate mitigation of COVID-19 precautions. In 2020 YMCA Malta had no positive COVID-19 infections within the team & the service-users.



In 2020, the highest reason for referral was that of financial problems followed by renting problems and family issues. Other reasons for referrals are listed in the above table.

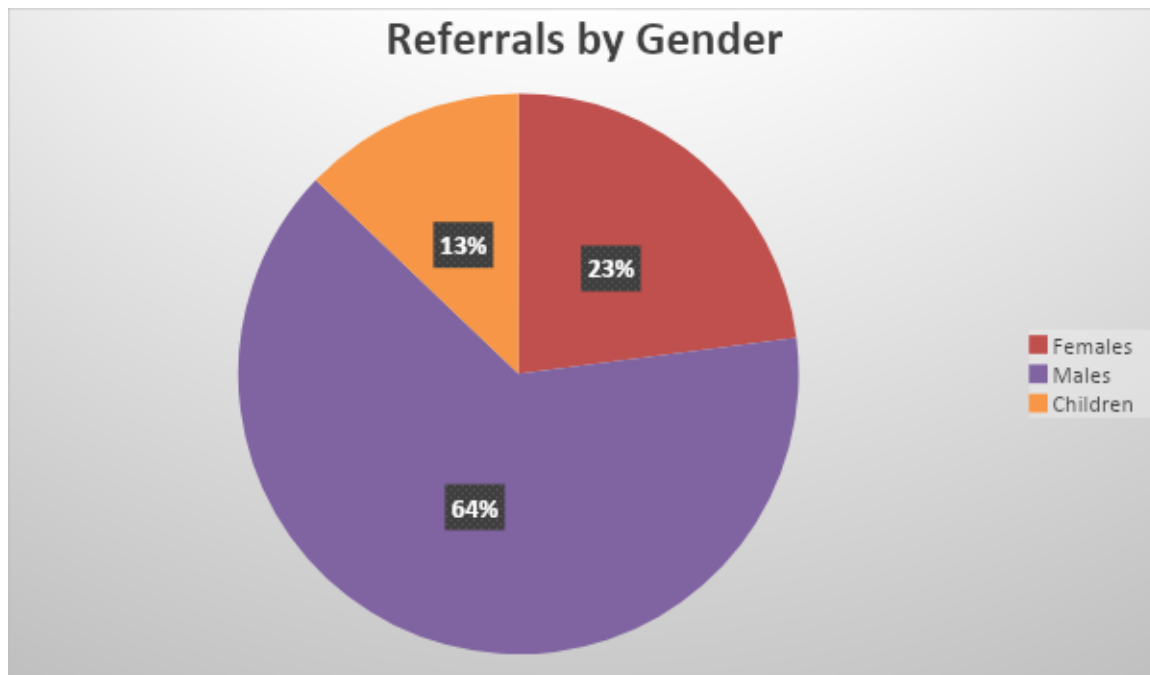


In the past three years YMCA Malta gave 31,433 bed nights to homeless people. Between 2005 and 2020 YMCA has given 119,565 bed nights, a roof & special care to those homeless.

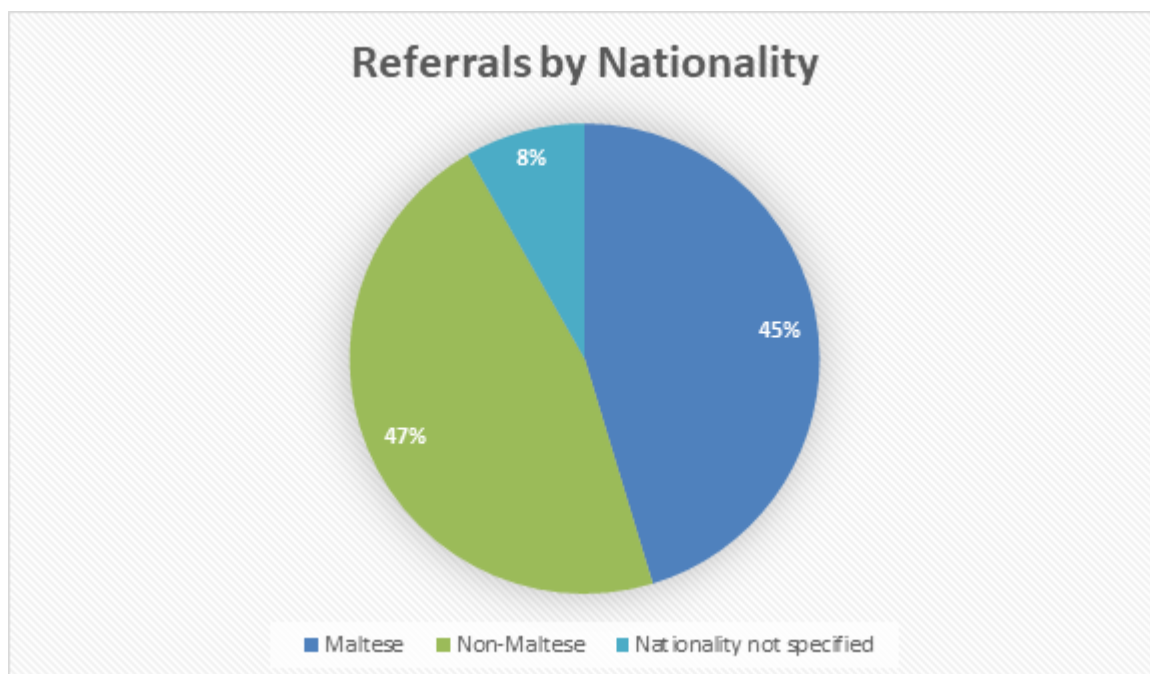


The highest category like in 2019, in 2020 remains those between the ages of 25-35 years of age with 32%. In 2019 this category was 27%. The highest category is followed by those under the age of 18 (21%) which in 2019 this was only 16% and therefore increased. Whilst those between 18 and 24 years of age (15%) remained with the same percentage as 2019.

Those between 40 to 59 years of age (16%) decreased from 2019 (22%). Also those cases of age 60+ decreased from 2019 (7%).



The majority of cases YMCA Malta had in 2020 were males followed by 23% females and 13% children. Whereas in 2019, 56% were males, 28% were females & 16% children.



Non-Maltese remain the highest category of cases referred to the YMCA. In 2019 55% were foreigners whilst 45% were Maltese. Considering the lack of information on 8% of the cases

the categories are relatively the same as last year. In 2019, 33% were EU residents whilst 67% were migrant cases out of 55%.

The situation in 2020 is quite similar to that of the previous year. In fact, 47% of referrals made to YMCA Malta were for non-Maltese nationals of which 14.34% EU Nationals and 83.72% were Third-Country Nationals. 45% of service-users referred to YMCA Malta were Maltese Nationals. Finally, 17.83% of referrals did not disclose the service-users' nationality.

### **J. H.O.P.E. - Homeless Opportunities Prevention and Education**

H.O.P.E. integrates an evidence-based programme approach and vision towards providing an alternative service-provision pathway towards reintegration. It targets service-users that itself are integrated in the service-provision given.

H.O.P.E. has been in action since 2019 fulfilling several goals: have achieved a semi-independent living and fulfilled a care programme achieving a second objective that not only reintegrate the service-users to the community but the community

1. Housing families who do not have a home with an objective to invest in families who are not able to reintegrate in society after a 'housing first' approach.
2. Helping families find and retain their home with an objective to expand the support families need in order to experience a tenancy support scheme to their budget.
3. Increasing opportunities and options across housing and employment with an objective to retain, protect and increase opportunities of their active employment and housing and create further opportunities such as in-house education.
4. Building capacity and improvement for active citizenship with an objective to enhance the capacity for service-users to be actively involved in society and outreach to community to be actively involved in HOPE itself through Education, Activities and Opportunities.
5. Instilling hope to successfully move on with achieving the objective of resources, skills, support and integration.

Since 2019, YMCA Malta has given the opportunity to 4 individuals in 2019 that benefitted from part-time employment and 5 individuals in paid employment (2 full-time and 3 part-time basis). These individuals were all ex-homeless people in the past.

### **K. ProjectABLE**

Through projectABLE we have created the space within our YMCA residences where residents teach and share their skills and talents with each other. This aims to help the residents acknowledge their strengths, believe in themselves, learn new skills (from other residents) and empower each other and within the DNC community. We firmly believe that every individual has strengths, and these are promoted through projectABLE. In other words, we continue to look at what makes our clients unique and their strengths and

empower them. Throughout 2020, 11 classes were held by residents themselves for the residents teaching each other several skills such as cooking, crafts, meditation etc...

### **L. Y'Visible**

Y'Visible is an outreach service with the purpose of tackling visible homelessness in Malta. Members of the residential team visit various locations in Malta in an attempt to reach out to people who are sleeping rough, with the provision of food, blankets, clothing and information of services. This project has a proactive side whereby we search for individuals who are roofless during allocated times and the reactive side whereby we respond to reports from professionals and concerned members of the public in relation to people who are roofless.

In 2020, the community has made numerous contact with us via telephone and social media reporting sights of homeless people in several localities. Throughout 2020, YMCA supported 34 individuals who were roofless providing them with bedding, food, water, clothes, face-masks, taxi transport to APPOGG premises and service advice.

Through outreaching we supported numerous individuals who were afraid and struggling to come to terms with their situation. This sometimes meant to guide them on steps needed to take in order to reach safety. For those who were not ready to leave their situations, it meant helping them know that when they are ready YMCA will be there to support them.

### **M. Y' Kids**

YMCA Malta has always been on the front creating activities for children. Despite the many difficulties that the pandemic brought with it 'Because your Children's Happiness is our Priority' continued to be carried out in-house within the residential premises. This periodical activity within YMCA's shelters revolves around presentations and discussions whereby parents residing at 'Dar Niki Cassar' and 'Y Communal Home' discuss obstacles and situations that they may encounter in relation to their children whilst living within the shelters. It also provides them with a platform to share their thoughts and contribute their ideas and learn new skills of how they can tackle certain issues which they might face from time-to-time.

However, several activities that are carried out with children via the Youth Facility Centres we have in Valletta and Zabbar had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 impact.

## **N. Y' Queens**

Y' Queens involves a number of ladies residing within our shelters, who come together twice a week and carry out a number of activities. This group is supported by team members but residents play an active role in deciding what activities they would like to carry out. This group aims at empowering the ladies within our shelters, helps to enrich time and creates a space for a community activity. Another 9 in-house creative sessions were carried out in 2020.

## **O. Residential Activities**

Continuous activities are organised according to the resident's needs and preferences. These have included BBQs, pancake nights, halloween parties, games & movie nights, Christmas parties and regular community meals. In total, in 2020, the residential activities, despite COVID-19 impact, were around 140 events.

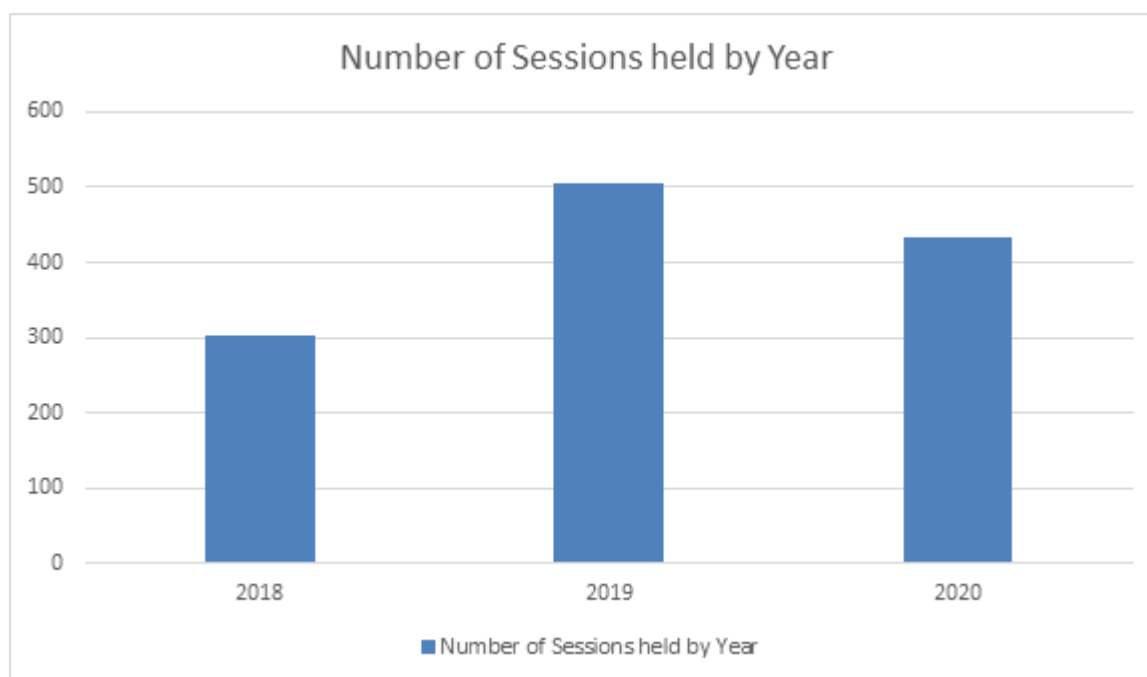
## **P. Educational Contributions**

Youth Empowerment is also about providing an educational pathway to volunteers, students and interns that come across YMCA and dedicate their time within one or more of our services. Interns and students who are hosted within YMCA as part of their studies are on placement or are contributing their time in a voluntary capacity. During this time, we provide training and work with the students and volunteers throughout their progress. Additionally, we also provide ongoing training opportunities to our team members and we are also actively involved in providing educational talks and workshops in schools and at the University of Malta.

Throughout 2020 apart from paid staff the volunteers, interns and students had the opportunity to participate in several educational opportunities. In-house a series of support and guidance meetings (introductory meetings, support sessions, performance appraisals, evaluation meetings, project meetings and team-building meetings) are carried out periodically. In 2020, a total of 150 support and guidance meetings were carried out.

## **Q. Psychotherapeutic Services**

The Psychotherapeutic Services, which have been operating since 2016, is mainly provided through volunteer psychotherapists and counsellors. YMCA Malta provides this service also to those in the community who are unable to seek these services privately.

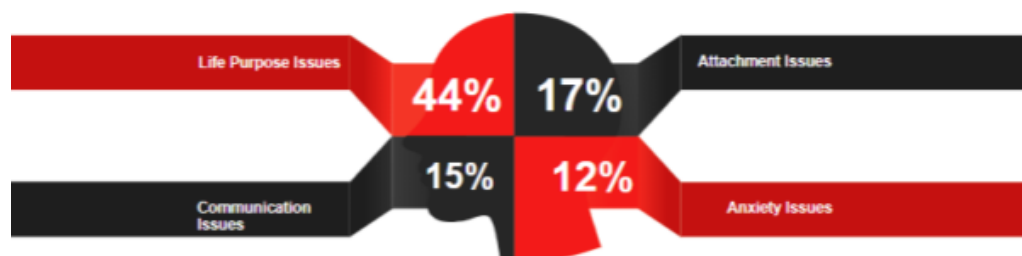


Despite COVID-19 which affected face-to-face interaction and sessions, the sessions were held mostly online. A total of 434 sessions were carried out unlike in 2019 which was of 506 sessions.



The highest number of sessions in 2020 were given to community clients unlike in 2019 (274) with 230 given to community clients in need (183 given in 2019 to the community) and 111 given in-house to residents. 93 sessions were carried out with staff members and volunteers which increased from 2019 (49 sessions).

## 2020: List of Issues encountered:



Whilst in 2019, 42% sought the service for relationship issues followed by 29% with anxiety issues and 21% loss issues in 2020, 44% had life purposes issues followed by 17% attachment issues and 15% communication issues. Apart from these issues we encounter in counselling and psychotherapy, other issues that service-users bring forward are depression, anxiety, grief and loss, anger, dependency and addictive behaviour, trauma, sexual orientation, relationship issues and conflict, self-esteem and separation & divorce matters.

### **R. Youth Work & Community Services**

In 2020, despite the pandemic during the third and fourth quarter - Youth Work & Community Services with young people from the community continued to be developed and strengthened. Several mentoring sessions and interventions were carried with young adults and other community service users. The interventions carried out included individual meetings, texting and telephone conversations upon topics ranging from self-development, job-oriented or academic. A total of 41 interventions were carried out in self-development, 52 interventions on academic and 25 interventions that were job-oriented.

Guidance and Support interventions with the same client-population from the community were given throughout 2020 ranging from psycho-emotional (156 interventions), food and clothing (56 interventions) and paperwork (146 interventions).

### **5. Qualitative Research: The Impact of COVID-19**

YMCA Malta commissioned a quantitative research (The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Quality of Life in Malta) that was carried out by the following Psychotherapists - Anthony



Camilleri, Katya Caruana, Caroline Vassallo and Gillian Pillow. Below is the abstract of the paper published on this research:

This research replicates a methodology originally conducted in the Balkans, the purpose of which was to present short measures of perceptions on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on quality of life (2020). Cronbach's Alpha register provided enough consistency, ascertaining internal validity, allowing for this research to build further on it, solidly and reliably. This research presents the outcome measures from a Gestalt Psychotherapy (GT) perspective and in a newer and different context. Research was administered in 2020 with a sample population in Malta. Its essential value lies in it being a *de facto* replicated method, which strengthens the reliability, validity and generalisability of the study, as is known in humanistic and social sciences with replicated methods, if and once results are corroborated. A Likert-scale questionnaire of a set of 6 questions was administered amongst 437 respondents, a random, non-clinical, non-specific, population sample, by means of an online survey as a method. Responses were organised, and data analysed, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-27 Software) as a tool. A total of 437 respondents participated: 128 were male, 300 were female, and 3 identified as transgender, non-binary or other. The general respondent age ranged from <18 to 65+, with 24% of responses being from the 65+ range. A core value of this research is that it is relatively innovative for GT, and that whereas GT is often criticised for lacking quantitative measures, this paper also adds to its value in that respect. The study portrays correlations found between variables, and primarily it became visible that tension and depression are correlated monotonically wherein respondents reported an increase in both due to the Covid pandemic and its effect.

## **6. Social Business Programme**

Every year YMCA Malta tries to find ways and means to raise the funds necessary in order to continue giving its services to the vulnerable. In this section we mention few of our endeavours in 2020 that were successful:

### **a. 365 Campaign**

365 Campaign was relaunched after many years dormant as an initiative in 2020 as a specific campaign whereby YMCA sought support from companies, individuals, and groups of people to join forces in raising €365.

Although with the assistance of YMCA volunteers, a total of €122,756 was saved in 2019, in 2020 due to COVID-19 YMCA did not benefit from this service and suffered a huge loss due to COVID-19 restrictions. Through our education pillar in our Youth Empowerment Programme, we recruit every year interns, students, and volunteers both locally and also foreign to experience hands-on working with the vulnerable and provide us with support for our different services. However, 2020, failed to provide us with this mutual benefit due to many health restrictions.

YMCA's expense for providing its' professional services is increasing every year with its' increasing services to the vulnerable communities. In 2020 this expense was over €228,560.

However, over 50 financial donations by individuals, companies, and groups of friends supported this plea in 2020 reaching €66,238 raised and donated to YMCA.

### **b. YMCA Vintage and Charity Shop**

The YMCA Malta Charity and Vintage Shop was opened in the last quarter of 2019 in Żabbar. The idea behind this social business venture, which is operated mainly by volunteers, is to support YMCA Malta through the generation of funds by selling second-hand donated items.

Being environmentally conscious is extremely important for us. Thus, by giving a new life to used items, we reduce the waste in our landfills. This is achieved by applying the 3 R's, that is, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, while adopting a circular economy approach.

Additionally, we provide items at a significantly reduced price or free of charge to those community members who are experiencing poverty or other social issues and thus would not be able to purchase the items in conventional shops.

Moreover, thanks to the Charity and Vintage Shop, YMCA Malta provides hands-on experience and training to both local students and international interns.

Despite the lockdown and the restrictions on the islands the charity shop still opened its doors when the latter restrictions were lifted.

### **c. Online Auction**

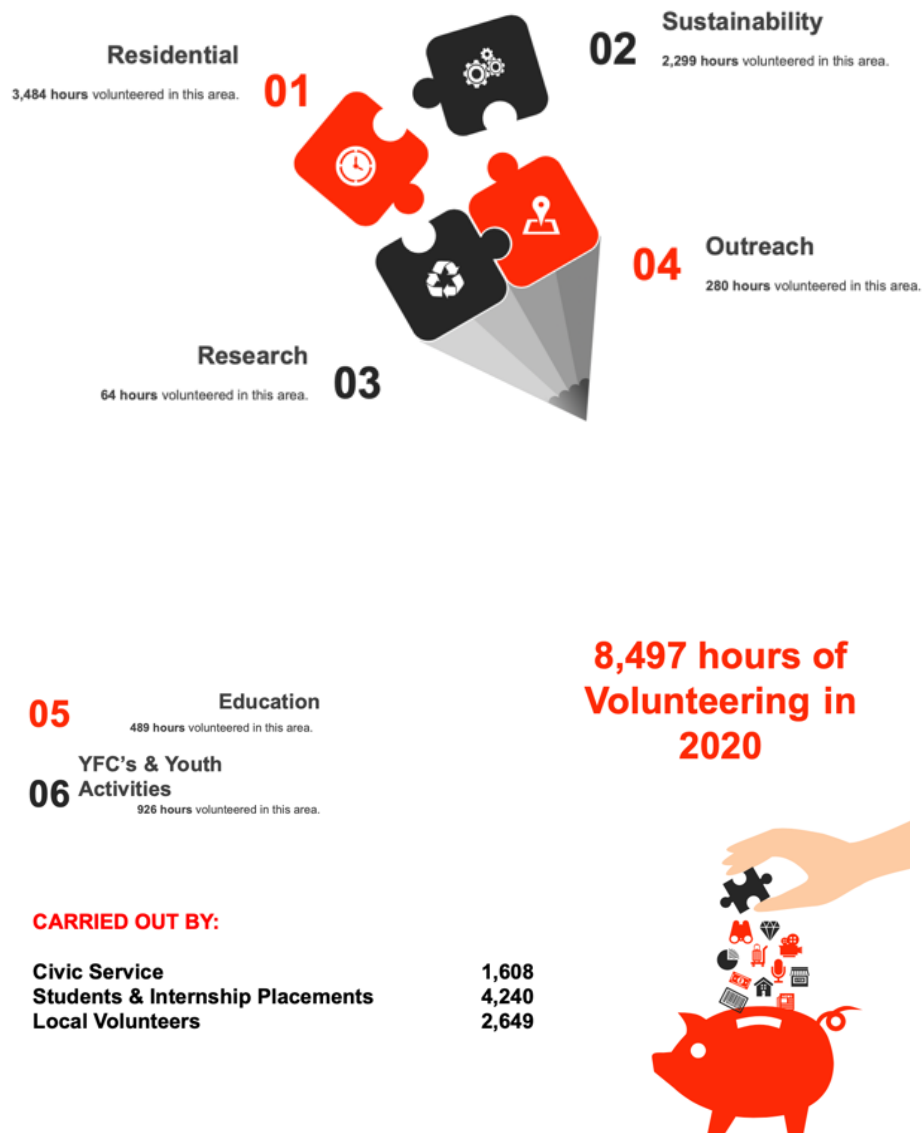
11 local artists donated 15 original paintings for the first YMCA Malta Online Art Auction. A huge thank-you goes to the artists who participated in this auction and donated their art to YMCA which was worth more than €2000.

- Anthony Lucian Cauchi
- Gulja Holland
- Leszek Soltsyik
- Dorothea Rapa
- Ann Koruma
- Denyse Scerri
- Selina Scerri
- Francella Pace
- Miriam Cauchi

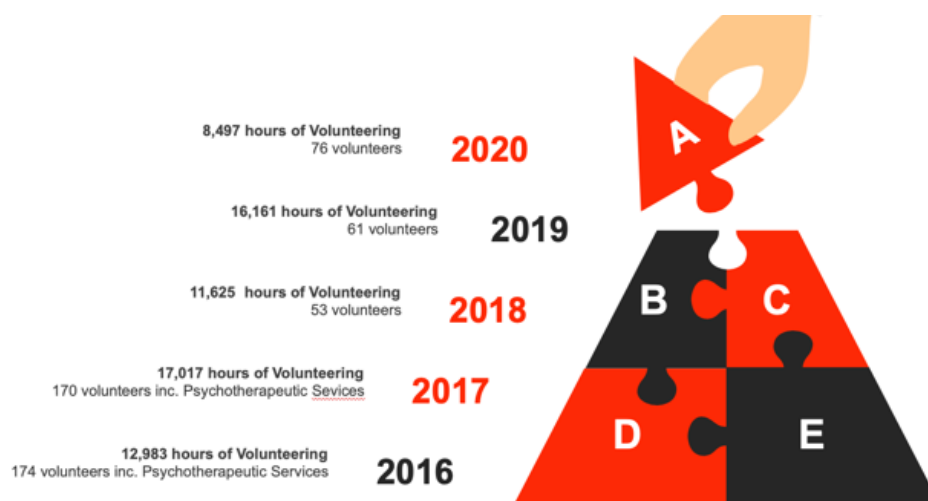
- Kenneth Zammit Tabona
- Matthew Cassar

## 7. Volunteering

In 2020, 8,497 hours were given by volunteers, interns and students spread in residential, sustainability, research, outreach, education and Youth Facility Center & youth activities.



Whilst students and interns placement covered 4,240 hours of volunteering work, 2,649 were covered by local volunteers which continued to increase in 2020. The remaining hours were covered by a Civic Service agreement we had in 2020 with YMCA France.



Since 2016, in 2020 it was the first time that local volunteers exceeded the yearly average given by students/interns.

## 8. Kunċert Tama

‘Kunċert Tama’ - Christmas concert took place on 19th December 2020. It was organised with the participation of Phyllisienne Brincat Vocal Academy with the choir that was made up of children and young people. This event took place at St Dominic’s Church in Valletta and was open to all benefactors that supported YMCA Malta and the service-users during such a difficult particular year. Despite many preparations of ‘Kunċert Tama’ were carried out months before, due to their restrictions which prevented church activities and also mass gatherings, the event was also streamed online on YMCA Malta social media thanks to 4Malta Media/News Company and other camera people that joined on the day and offered their support for free. Also this event couldn’t be carried out without the support of ‘is-Suq tal-Belt’ whereby the children and young people choir also carried a Christmas Carols service during the Christmas Week.

During the ‘Kunċert Tama’ this poem was released as a reminder of our homeless families and children that were spending their Christmas in our sheltered accommodations:

### TAMA

Is-sodda mhijiex tiegħi, imma norqod mistrieħ.  
 Iċ-ċavetta m’għandiex, imma offrewli post.  
 Niekol barra ma nistax, imma qatt ma rqadt bil-ġuħ,  
 għaliex hawn ġew kuljum offrewli platt sħun.  
 Ismi huwa Karl.

Qatt ma irqadt barra, mhux għax għandi dar.  
 Qatt ma sifirt, mhux għax m’għandiex passaport.  
 Qatt ma ġie Milied, mhux għax familja m’għandix,  
 imma għax għalihom jien ma neżistix.

Isma huwa Rebecca.

L-iskola l-uniformi dejjem pulita, għalkemm mislufa.  
Privat għal wieħed immur tnejn, għalkemm b'xejn.  
Mat-tim tal-futbol nilgħab, għalkemm ħsiebi mhux hemm.  
Id-dar nirritorna kull filgħaxija imma ġenituri m'għandiex.  
Ismi huwa Jacob.

Għalkemm tqila w it-triq kienet twila, flimkien għamilniha.  
Saqsejna ħafna nies mall-mogħdija, imma ħadd ma ta' widen.  
Staqsejna fil-lukanda u qalulna li post m'għandhomx.  
Kelli nwellded fil-maxtura fl-għar, lil Ġesu' tarbija.  
Ismi huwa Marija.

Tħallix dan il-Milied jgħaddi, mingħajr ma tinduna,  
li madwarek hemm Karl, Rebecca, Jacob u Marija.  
Tagħlaqx bibien, kollha għandhom bżonn l-għajnuna tiegħek.  
Tagħmilx b'għal dawk u tlebbet għal triqtek mall-mogħdija.

Il-Milied għal Karl huwa s-serġan tal-moħħ f'Dar Niki,  
il-Milied għal Rebecca huwa l-għajnuna li sabet hemm ġewwa,  
il-Milied għal Jacob hi l-familja li sab, fit-tim li qed jgħinu,  
il-Milied għal Marija huwa li twellded f'qalbek din ir-realta'.

Tħallix dan il-Milied jgħaddi, mingħajr ma tiskopri,  
li anke int tista' tkun wieħed mill-maġi, li tivvjaġġa sakemm  
Tintaqa' u tagħti r-rigal lit-tarbija. Din hi l-istorja tal-Milied!  
X'hini jekk mhux biss sabiex nitgħallmu nagħmlu wisa f'qalbna?

Nagħmlu wisa' għal nies bla dar li qed ibatu,  
nagħmlu wisa' għall-ommijiet mingħajr għajnuna,  
Nagħmlu wisa' għal dawk iltiema mingħajr familja,  
Nagħmlu wisa' sabiex it-tama li nwellduh f'qalbna ma tmut qatt.

X'hinu il-Milied jekk mhux tama li xi darba nifhmu?  
Li t-twelid ta' Ġesu fil-maxtura, fil-faqar, fil-ħemda lil hinn mis-sabiħ,  
huwa messaġġ importanti għalina li hemm biss insibu l-ferħ.  
Il-ferħ hu f'dak li tagħti lil dawk li fil-faqar qegħdin.

Kun wieħed mill-maġi u tgħallim x'ittik il-maxtura.  
Kun wieħed mill-aṅġli u iġri xerred it-tama.  
Kun wieħed mir-rgħajja u stagħġeb b'dak li qed tara.  
Kun inti li tiftaħ l-għar ħa twellded lil Ġesu' f'qalbek.

Dal-Milied x'hinu jekk mhux it-tama li anke int tista' tinbidel.  
U f'qalbek twellded post għal Karl, Rebecca, Jacob u Marija.

## **9. 'L-Ikla tal-Ħbieb'**

For the seventh consecutive year, YMCA Malta, in collaboration with YWCA Malta and St. Dominic's Church in Valletta, organised the annual 'Ikla tal-Ħbieb'. As previous years a mass was celebrated at St. Dominic's Church. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions and safety measures in place, the usual community lunch meal could not take place and for this reason, instead, the participants were provided with a warm packed lunch together with a Christmas gift for the children.

YMCA Malta would like to thank the benefactors that provided us with toys that we could disseminate to children in the community that attended this event on an annual basis with their families. In 2020, around 120 vulnerable individuals were reached and supported with a warm meal during such a festive season.

## **10. Benefactors**

### **a. Y'Friends**

In 2020, Y' Friends, a service-club to the YMCA continued to support YMCA Malta. Throughout the past year, 8 members formed part of this club whereby they met periodically to support the financial needs and requirements of YMCA. In 2020, an agreement was drawn between Y' Friends and YMCA Malta so that the service-club would be more involved at a grass-root level to continue its mission in sustainability.

### **b. Corporate Social Responsibility**

### **c. Other Benefactors**

YMCA Malta couldn't be able to carry out its' services and projects if it was not for the benefactors that believed and supported financially and in-kind throughout the whole year:

Ministry for Family, Children's Rights, and Social Solidarity

Malta Council for Voluntary Sector

European Union Programmes Agency

Agenzija Zghazagh

The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society

The Malta Trust Foundation

Tal-Lira  
La Grenier a' Pain  
Burgers Ink  
Il-Mithna  
Posh Turk  
Lions Club Sliema  
Convenience Shop  
Forestals Malta  
I See Malta  
Cryptology Asset Group  
Melita  
Star Groups  
Platin Casino  
Malta Enterprise  
Moviment Graffitti  
KSI Malta  
Bonnici Insurance  
Middlesea Mapfre Insurance  
Malta Health Students Associations  
Jesmond Mizzi Financial Advisors  
Secure Trading Financial Services  
Fenech & Fenech Advocates  
Crane Currency Foundation  
Tektraco Limited  
D J COPE  
Malta Properties  
M Demajo Ltd.  
Food Chain Ltd.  
Zeal Ltd.  
Argus Insurance Ltd.  
Genesis  
Debono Holdings  
Seifert Ltd.  
Hartons  
Alberta  
LIDL Malta  
Go  
Vodafone  
KFC Malta  
Burgers Ink  
Davids' Bakery

Solar Solutions

APS

Several other individuals and families

Several other benefactors that wanted to be kept anonymous.

## **11. Affiliations**

- World Alliances of YMCAs
- European Alliance of YMCAs
- Women Against Violence (WAVE)
- European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANSTA)
- The Platform of Human Rights Organisations in Malta (PHROM)
- Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women & Domestic Violence (GREVIO)
- YMCA Platform Against Homelessness

## **12. Solar Panels DNC**

Initiated in 2019, 'Let's go Eco-friendly' Project was concluded in 2020 with a presentation at 'Dar Niki Cassar' shelter on the 10th January 2020 together with the Solar Solution representative that gave us reduced price of the solar system and the CEO of APS Bank whom refurbished half of the expense. Nowadays, YMCA's 'Dar Niki Cassar' shelter benefits from cheaper electricity bills due to the installation of around 10 solar panels on the roof.

## **13. COVID-19 Impact Funds**

Due to COVID-19 impact YMCA Malta had to look at several ways and means of how to get funding that was lost due to the pandemic especially with postponed fundraising events that could not take place. The below are the main initiatives that YMCA Malta would like to mention and thank those involved in making it happen and support in covering part of the lost funds;

### **a. Crane Currency**

YMCA Malta benefitted from USD5,000 funding in 2020 thanks to Crane Currency in relation to the support given to families especially women and children living at our residences for the homeless. This financial support helped YMCA to finally have more secure funding in continuing educational and recreational activities in-house.

### **b. MCVS COVID-19 Emergency Fund**



YMCA Malta benefitted from €5,000 funding in 2020 thanks to the Malta Council for Voluntary Sector in their financial assistance via COVID-19 Emergency Fund. This funding assisted in having more secure funding to cover expenses on rent, water and electricity and COVID-19 essentials like masks, sanitizers etc...

**c. Malta Enterprise**

YMCA Malta would also like to thank Malta Enterprise for covering the quarantine leave whenever one of our members was on quarantine and also the wage supplement for one of the employees that was directly affected in the role of Coordination of the Charity Shop & the Youth Hostel, which both were closed during each and every lockdown carried out.

**d. MCVS Operational Assistance Scheme (OAS)**

€15,852 funding was covered under the OAS 1st phase scheme that YMCA Malta benefitted from. This funding continued to assist us mainly in being able to pay professional salaries and reduce the mishap in cash flow that we suffered the most in 2020.

**e. YMCA Solidarity Fund**

YMCA Malta was also successful in obtaining CHF20,000 funding from the World Alliance of YMCAs through its Solidarity Fund launched after the pandemic hit the whole world. This funding assisted in covering mostly part of the salaries of 10 full-time workers as a means of wage supplement whilst also assisted in administration expenses to cover petty cash needed at both of the residences and the Loneliness Response Line.

## **14. Beneficiaries**

YMCA Malta supports, assists, and advocates for and on behalf of the most vulnerable in our communities irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation, race, nationality, age, religion and political affiliations to create a more just society.

- Victims & survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence
- People without access to proper education
- Homeless individuals and families
- Families in difficulty
- Victims of usury
- Stranded travellers
- Victims of child abuse
- Unemployed persons
- People facing financial issues
- People living in substandard housing

- Youths
- Victims of addiction such a gambling
- Asylum seekers