

Oral History Kosovo

Interviewer: When did you start working?

Narrator: I first started working in 2007 and never stopped. I started working only once a week.

Interviewer: What did you do, what kind of job?

Narrator: I worked as a housekeeper because I had no other choice, my children were little, my husband worked, but very little.

Interviewer: What does he work?

Narrator: He works in an insurance company, in Hortikulturë. But back then, they had very low wages, when we went to live in our house, he got 80 marks, marks were still being used, 80 mark salary. My uncle's daughter got me my first job.

Interviewer: Tell us how.

Narrator: She worked in that job. We met at my brother's, it was his children's birthday, first birthday, he had twins, he still does. And she was working there and she got engaged and her husband didn't want her to. "We don't need to, you don't need to work." She said, "Will you go work, why don't you work?" "Yes," I said, "I don't know where and it's hard to start alone." "No," she said, "I'll call where I work and we'll see, you can go." She immediately said, "Yes, she can come." She took me there, for a month, I went once a week, I didn't tell anyone that I was working."

Interviewer: What was it like to go to someone you didn't know before?

Narrator: It was hard, very hard. I don't know how to explain it, when you go to a house for the first time, it's like a foreign country. I don't know, I've never been, but it's the same as when you go to a foreign country where you don't know the environment... to start from zero it's quite a hard job. But looking around, asking, "Where, how? Do you like it here or here?" The first day, when I went the next week, I started, working a little every... it's not that I didn't know things, but in someone else's house you don't know the places, but she was content with me. And I started helping at home, not that it was much, but it was quite good for me because I was at home all week, only working for a day. When you know how to manage it, you have to, it's work, you can do it.

Interviewer: What were your tasks, what did you have to do?

Narrator: What were my tasks, everything that I saw, from...

Interviewer: A little...

Narrator: Starting from the windows, doors, floor. All the elements in the kitchen. Except for food, I never cooked or anything else. I had to iron... all the housework, there was also a yard, I had to clean it, but I didn't mind, I just wanted her to be content. And I wanted to take the money, as they say, as halal as possible because I had to raise and feed my children with that money.

A German friend of hers came and she saw me working and liked my work, she said, it was around November, "I'm going to Germany during the holidays, end-of-the-year holidays, but when I come back, can you work for me?" She said, "You have to work twice a week." I said, "I will try." I felt sorry to leave my daughter who was three years old. You know, I could hardly wait to be done and go home to my daughter, because I was still feeding her.

And she came back and called me, I worked twice a week there. One day from 9:00 to 16:00, the other day from 12:00 to 16:00, but she paid me very well. And she was very content and her children were the same age as mine and she was very nice. Her daughter was as old as mine, she would buy my daughter whatever she bought hers.

I didn't mind working, I did everything. She would say, "I've only seen Albanians clean the windows everyday, okay on the inside, but don't clean them outside because the rain gets them dirty anyway." I worked there for two years, almost three, and she had to leave. And she said, "I feel so bad that I'm leaving you unemployed, there are people who aren't hardworking and have jobs. You're so hardworking and you will be unemployed."

She said, "I'll give your phone number to UNDP, I have a friend there," she said, "but I don't think they will call you now, but when they need a substitute." Trust me, I didn't believe her, I thought she's done with her work and gone, no one will think of me. But she was very nice and they called me one, as a substitute for a month. The pay was very good at UNDP.

I worked for a month, until the woman who was on a leave came back, at her job, they liked my work there a lot. Many people said, "Can you come?" But the week was only seven days long, no more. It's a very tiring job, it isn't easy, there are all kinds of experiences. There are some very nice people, then there are, so to say, bad people, they are, it's hard to say, but there are also people like that. Maybe it isn't easy for them either to welcome strangers in the house, it isn't easy for them, but it still is harder for us to go to a stranger's house.

Around three or four months, I don't exactly know how long, but it seems like a long time, I worked in Velania, I won't mention their name, the wife hired me, she was very nice, but she had a very rude mother-in-law. She liked my work, "You work very well, but too slowly." But, it won't be fast and good. I had to work from 9:00 to 13:00, you can't finish all housework from 9:00 to 13:00 and leave, I wanted to do everything well and I stayed longer, a little longer.

But I didn't mind the salary, I just wanted them to be content. The wife would tell me, "I don't know what I would do if it weren't for you, you work so well." I couldn't wait to find something else and quite, trust me I barely went there. There are many places that I work now, I feel like I'm going to a friend, or to my sister... I'm that comfortable. I have the key, I get in, work, get out. Even if I don't finish it doesn't matter.

"Work whoever you know how." They're very nice. But I went there very... I was so happy when they called me at UNDP as a substitute. I felt so bad to tell the wife, tell her, "I can't come anymore." I was happy when UNDP called me, and I quit and didn't go anymore. Very, it's not a good job because there's no insurance, no pension. If you quit tomorrow, it doesn't show that...

Interviewer: You worked.

Narrator: You worked. And now...

Interviewer: Until now, you've never had a contract?

Narrator: Back then at UNDP, yes.

Interviewer: Yes, in the others?

Narrator: In the others, no.