

July 2018

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Dear donors, dear members!

Albania still has many problems. Some of those are the infrastructure, migration, standard of living and the perspective of young people. The complete list would be much longer. The measures against all these problems are expensive and complicated and change is slow. We have a lot of understanding and we help where we can.

Albania's nightmare

What happens in families with mentally handicapped parents is probably the biggest tragedy in this country. It is too much to witness, even for experienced IPA staff. The children, who are also mostly mentally handicapped, grow up under truly shocking circumstances without any chance of a humane life. Social services can barely alleviate this heart-breaking distress, whilst new children continue to be born. The urgently needed laws to protect these people are missing. The government therefore permits more victims to be born into this situation. Help in the form of legislation is urgently needed, this is not expensive and would help those affected as well as the whole country.

Pietro Tomasini
Managing Director IPA

Logone-Birni and Kidam, North Cameroon

Ten years Savings Bank

In 2008 the project for a savings bank in Logone-Birni was started. After the last expansion into the region of Kidam it has now reached its optimal size.

A failed project by the African Development Bank was built up by IPA. The building already existed, the institution was officially registered and there were even statutory documents. But the savings bank in Logone-Birni had never been operationally active, so the idea sounded interesting. A small local bank whose managers knew the clients in the area would grant small loans and encourage people to save money. With fair conditions and good advice, Nigerian loan sharks would be competed against and finally driven away. Avoiding the mistakes of the preceding project was one of the most simple tasks.



Women and men at an information meeting

Ten years later we can say that things went according to plan. However, the financial and political environment could not have

been worse. The already fragile economy in the north of the country was even more damaged by the assaults of Boko Haram further west. Closed borders, assembly bans, trade and travel restrictions, how can an economy flourish under such circumstances? But the savings bank also had its trump card: „Papa Marouf“, the holy and wise man of the region, is the ideal presi-



Many loans were granted to women

dent. There is also our extremely committed IPA partner and a management that focuses its work on advising their credit recipients to the best of their knowledge.

Difficult expansion into the region of Kidam

The savings bank in Logone-Birni survived all the problems and was finally established in the area of Kidam, after a first expansion into the region of Hinalé. The government had prohibited every meeting of more than twenty people, the fear of assaults was still big, but for the people in Kidam, the savings bank was the chance of their lives. They would get loans at fair conditions from an institution with a good reputation, backed by



Small shops were opened

a Swiss organisation which is well known in the area. Of course the interest was enormous. Hundreds of people had to be informed in dozens of small workshops. This was a mammoth task for all the people involved. Already 130 new members have joined the cooperatively organised bank and almost 300 applications for loans have been handed in. 100 of them were granted in a first phase. Now a lot of different small businesses have sprung up like mushrooms. They will advance the economy of the area in future.



Married couples can now cultivate a plot of land

The savings bank is still going well after ten years. More than 400 members from three regions not only pay their annual fees, but also their contributions to the solidarity fund. Together, with the interest from the loans, this makes a successful business model possible. However, putting their money into a savings account is still not very popular in Cameroon, it is often kept under mattresses. People are not willing to entrust their money to a bank, but maybe this will change over the next ten years.

Tarazh, North Albania

Out of the shadow of communism

It was not the first time that IPA replaced the roof of a school building, but never before had such a project caused so many difficulties for our partner organisation.

What the visitors first saw was the old railway bridge which crossed the valley. Built in



Ceiling and walls, soaked by water

the 1980s, never completed, partly collapsed, it is a relic of the final phase of communist times. It was only afterwards that visitors noticed the modest building of the nine-year school in Tarazh. It did not look any better than the railway bridge. One room had already been locked up, the ceiling was



The old roof beams – it was high time indeed

sagging dangerously. “This is too dangerous for the children, the roof may come down any moment”, a teacher said. In an extremely pleasant contrast, was even then the commitment of the teaching staff. Never before had the IPA representatives discovered so many self-made teaching materials. Another good reason to replace both the roof and the ceiling.

A marathon of negotiations

There was no reason to assume that difficul-

ties might appear. The building firm had often worked for IPA in the north of Albania, the job was feasible. IPA already knew the elderly school director. We had planned four days for the supervision of the project on site, in the end we needed forty.

The director, his thinking still loyal to communist times, intervened right from the beginning when it came to reusing the old roof tiles. They were intended to be given to the poorest families in the village, but the school director laid claim to them himself and tried to block the project. There were long meetings, discussions and one-on-one talks with almost each villager. The project was more



The first step: the new roof

and more delayed. When finally the IPA partner had convinced him, time was getting short. “My brother can repair the ceiling”, the director now put his oar in again, but his offer was 800 Euros above the one of the building firm that had already received the order. Trying to make money for himself and his relatives, the director now began to spread misinformation, to set part of the villagers against the IPA partner organisation. This meant new discussions and another loss of time, but the feisty IPA partner finally won again.



The IPA partner standing in front of the table covered with thank-you-letters

At long last the school building looks different from the bridge behind it. At least the



Hard work: after the completion of the project the teachers are cleaning their school.

roof and the ceiling are new, here the ghost of the old elites is kept at bay. The teachers and the children are relieved and happy. A table, covered with drawings, thank-you-letters and cards was waiting for the members of Chramschof Zollikerberg (near Zurich, Switzerland), the main donor, when they visited the school. Further part-projects might follow in 2019. By that time, the director will hopefully be retired. Chances are good that the school in Tarazh will overcome the old times and problems and one day people will first notice the splendid school building and only then the collapsed bridge in the background.

Mtonya, North Malawi

Bilateral effect – for once in a different way

For Swiss students drinking water is always one of the most important topics when it comes to choosing a project. Thanks to a school class in Zurich, a small village in the north of Malawi has now access to a well.

Offering education or satisfying the basic needs? That was the most vital question the students at the Free Protestant School (FES) were facing. They had presented various projects to each other and were now allowed to choose the one they wanted to support. We quickly expected them to discuss some fundamental questions, but unfortunately only few of them were seriously

interested. For most of them this was simply another kind of lesson, something IPA had hardly ever experienced before. The choice of the project in Mtonya was enormously important for the villagers. One woman said: „We keep our fingers crossed until we see that the miracle in our village is actually happening!“

The old well had been disused for many years. Women and girls had to scoop water out of a small brook that runs below the village. Steep paths, dirty water and above all snakes made life difficult for them. Many



People were bound to catch diarrhoea

children suffered from diarrhoea and cholera, and snakes bites happened regularly during the dry season.

A quota for women in the committee

„We are extremely pleased that young people your age care about the problems in our villages. We are ready to provide the materials and our manpower to make our contribution to the project“. This was the message sent in an email from Malawi to the students



Committed students were closely coached



A little proud: boys after the sale of roses

stood the concept of IPA, but they have helped to improve the living conditions in Mtonya considerably, even though they may not fully realise it yet. The cooperation brought about interesting side effects at FES. During the course some general problems between the classes had become apparent. The school board reacted quickly and initiated important changes that affected the whole school. So the IPA project finally had its effect on both sides, although in a different way than had been planned.

in Zurich. The proof of this promise followed as soon as the project was actually started. The students at FES had managed, with the help of various activities and a written appeal for donations, to reach the aim they had set themselves. The inhabitants of Mtonya helped wherever they could and fired 4,000 bricks to build a wall around the site. Most important was the election of a committee that will maintain the well in future. The first criterion: there had to be more women than men in it. The ten selected members were trained for their tasks and now they strictly respect the regulations they



The committee and its well



Training for the maintenance of the well

have set up themselves. According to a fixed plan each family has to clean the well. Every household pays 50 Malawi Kwacha for the water per month (about 5 pence). Those who do not pay or respect the regulations, will be reprimanded by the village chief.

Not all the students were able to identify with the project and not all of them under-

The Interview

No NGO offers the same as IPA

Why is the promotion of young people so important for the Mercator Switzerland Foundation?

Our world is reliant on people who are committed to positive social developments. Children and teenagers belong to a target group which we consider to have a lot of potential. Therefore, it is essential to support children and young adults in their commitment. We are trying hard to give them the opportunity to develop their potential.

Why did your foundation decide to support the mentoring of the IPA junior team?

The junior projects combine two requests of the foundation: the promotion of the social commitment of young people and the strengthening of their cross-cultural competence. The assisted confrontation with other lifestyles teaches them to understand people from various different backgrounds, to perceive new perspectives and to reflect on their own position. Back in Switzerland such positive experiences enable them to approach people from other cultures more open-mindedly.

In what way is the concept of the IPA junior project different from other projects you support?

Compared to other exchange projects the IPA junior projects focus on social commitment as well as the practical aspect of the project management. Unlike other projects which only foster social commitment, the IPA juniors also benefit from an intercultural experience. To gain so many experiences from one project is very special indeed. There is probably no other internationally active NGO that offers students something similar to IPA.

How was your cooperation with the leader of the junior team?

Very professional, very transparent and very up-to-date. I have rarely received such detailed information so regularly. You realise immediately that Nicole Delavy is totally committed.

Have the expected aims been reached?

I am impressed by what the juniors achieve every year and how many funds they are able to generate. It is also positive that the funding of the monitoring of the junior team is safer now than it was some years ago. What I regret is the fact that during the last three years the junior team has never been in the bigger media – for me a little fly in the ointment.



Olivia Höhener, 37, studied history, English philology and communication sciences at Bale University and then worked as a scientific assistant at Berne University. Since 2009 she has been a project manager with the Mercator Switzerland Foundation, focusing on communication and participation.

Preview of forthcoming IPA projects

Méwi, North Cameroon.

More than 360 children go to school in this village. Two classes, about 120 pupils altogether, have to be taught in huts made of clay bricks or in a concrete building whose roof has collapsed. Books, learning materials and toilets cannot be found in this place. The students of a project course at the Free Protestant School in Zurich are working on removing these shortcomings. The three



classrooms in the new building will be properly equipped and both the senior and the new teachers will be offered further training courses.

Murunda, North Malawi.

Help for the medical centre in the region of Jalawe, located in Murunda, is urgent, above all in the maternity ward. There are not enough beds and medicines are scarce. The constant supply of water cannot be guaranteed and there is only just enough electricity to run a small refrigerator containing vaccines.



IPA in a few words

- Swiss organisation for development co-operation with a branch in Beaconsfield, UK. Bulletin of ZEW0 and supported by DEZA (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation)
- Founded in 1994, since 2001 known and active under the name IPA (International Project Aid)
- Engaged in transitioning and developing countries with focus on learning and education
- IPA offers help for self-help, e.g. through projects in the fields of food production and water supply as well as the issuance of micro credits
- The aspect of the IPA brand is the integration of youth in the implementation of projects. Swiss students thus get the opportunity to gain formative experiences
- School classes and junior-teams define, plan and execute their projects independently but are supervised by experienced IPA staff
- All projects are inspected by IPA on location and, following completion, are controlled once more
- IPA has received the Profax prize in 2005, and in 2007 was named "Swiss Charity of the Year" by Man Investments

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