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Dear donors,
dear members!

Again and again we ask ourselves where we should start with our help. A far remote village in Cameroon needs everything, but what is absolutely essential? Our students often come up with “Maslow’s hierarchy of needs” when they want to justify why a well is more important than a school building. What comes first, a medical centre, the production of food or a savings bank? Basic needs or a long-term development, this is the crucial question. But what actually are basic needs?

Basic needs

My question has finally been answered. The listeners of a Swiss radio programme were granted a wish. A woman called the studio and the presenter asked her if she was working from home. “No, fortunately not”, the lady answered, she said, because in her small shop she sold things which were part of basic needs. Next the presenter asked her what these things were. “Alcohol and lottery tickets.” What a strange world! For us the term “basic needs” is not negotiable. Nevertheless, making decisions will remain difficult for us.

Pietro Tomasini
Managing Director IPA

Ouazzang, North Cameroon

A driving force for the local economy

In 2018 a class at Enge high school in Zurich established a savings bank in Ouazzang. Now their work has been extended and made more secure.

Almost ten years ago, a representative of the Mofou asked us to help his people in the north of Cameroon. When we visited the area, we were confronted with a completely impoverished and forgotten population. In this mountainous region close to the border with Nigeria, IPA had meanwhile refurbished several wells, had supported the school in Ouazzang, built two mills and the above mentioned savings bank. Thanks to a donation by the Leopold Bachmann Foundation, it was possible to expand the small bank. After the capital had been increased, more loans were issued and the purchase of a second motor bike made it easier to assist



A further education course at the savings bank in Douvanger

the recipients. Further education courses and visits to other savings banks strengthened the performance of the management. They had innovative ideas to promote the bank in the streets. At the end of the rainy

season the members of the cooperatively organised bank helped to repair the road leading into the region. At the same time, they used the opportunity to inform the in-



Women are getting advice

habitants of the villages along the route about the new opportunities the bank was able to offer them.

On the way to make history

The advertising worked, 65 new members were accepted and many other applications are being carefully examined. 60 loans from IPA funds and 21 from their own resources are a good result. These can be categorised



Obtaining a loan – a fantastic opportunity

into arable farming, livestock breeding and trade. The loan term can be chosen individually and varies between five to eight months at an interest rate of 1% per month. Compared to the 300% the loan sharks in the region charge per year, these conditions are very attractive. Well organised and financially secure, the management was able to advise the customers extremely well. The result was that the repayment quota of the issued loans was higher than 99%. Only two recipients were not able to repay the whole amount on time because they were ill.

The savings bank still draws attention to itself. Fundraising among the members as well as the interest payments provided the resources to pay for rewards given to girls who had achieved outstanding school re-



School materials as a reward

sults. They received their prizes in the form of school materials. This gave them the motivation to continue their school education and at the same time it was excellent publicity for the savings bank. The food production has been increased and because there are now new small shops, women do no longer have to buy goods in far-away places. The savings bank stands on a solid foundation and will be an even stronger force for the local economy in future. Step by step the



Small village shops make life easier for everybody

region is making progress and it has been noticed that fewer young adults move away from home. The management of the savings bank would like to go down in the history of their people. The chances are good indeed.

Prëshen, North Albania

A revitalisation programme

The library in Prëshen in the region of Mirdita is supposed to provide books, education and knowledge for 25,000 people, without any new books and without its own budget. IPA was able to give it a new boost.

Gjon Gazulli, a humanistic scholar, diplomat and monk, died over 500 years ago. He would have turned over in his grave if he had seen in what condition the library in Prëshen was a year ago, which is named



No longer in demand: the works of Enver Hoxha

after him. 9,200 out of 11,000 works date back to communist times. But who in modern Albania is still interested in the writings of Enver Hoxha. During the last ten years, not a single book was bought and so the number of readers became smaller and smaller. Despite this, the two librarians tried hard to encourage children to read. “Do you have this book?” – “No, I am sorry.” This conversation between a visitor and the librarian took place in October 2019. “This happens every day”, Bardhe Marku explained to the visitors from Switzerland. “People are genuinely interested, but we do not have any of the books they are looking for.”

More than simply “nice to have”

Finding donors was not easy. Many people might have thought that a library was not at the top of the list of basic necessities. But in a country where reading material is rare and where many families cannot afford to buy all

the books schools expect them to have, a library is absolutely essential, especially if you look at the cultural facilities. In small towns they simply do not exist. A library is therefore often the only place which offers some culture.



Arrival of the books

By summer 2020, generous donors had been found and the librarians were allowed to produce a budget, based on a wish-list. Their first suggestion was to buy a large number of books, mainly for children and students. If we had agreed to this, the library would have focused too much on one particular group, but everybody was meant to benefit. So, we found a compromise and



The help is greatly appreciated

bought 514 titles and 1,500 mixed books as well as a computer, a printer and a projector. The reading room for the children was refurbished and the head librarians organised an exchange with a children’s library in Tirana.

338 new members, among them 138 children, and 400 students in remote villages can borrow books from a mobile library in their school twice a month, are the positive key figures of the project. "It is one of the best projects in Albania since 1990", an enthusiastic visitor commented, and the mayor agreed with him and added: "The library has



Inside the newly refurbished reading room for children

been revitalised." The children are excited about the new reading material and the many activities and the older library users finally find the titles they are looking for. All kinds of events are being planned and so



65% of the readers' wishes were fulfilled

the library in Rrëshen is finding its way back to its role as the cultural centre of Mirdita. Gjon Gazulli would be pleased.

Rumphi, North Malawi / Zollikon, Switzerland

A partner school becomes a partner town

In 2014, in the biggest school of the small district capital, 17 school classes still sat under trees for their lessons. Meanwhile the school is in a much better state. The time has therefore come to help other schools.

"The fact that students in Switzerland support our school is very encouraging. Even the motivation of the headmistress has improved once more." This was said by the headmistress herself in her interview with IPA, laughing heartily about her own, subtle self-irony. Years ago her personality was one of the most important reasons for us to choose this project. She is an extremely committed, optimistic and well-organised woman. And yet, she had no chance to offer her pupils adequate educational facilities. More than 1,200 students in 34 classes had to share only 17 classrooms. Only a few of them had the privilege of sitting at a desk and there were hardly any textbooks.



A depressing initial situation

When the Secondary School in Zollikon-Zumikon, a loyal IPA partner for many years, was looking for a new, long-term project, IPA did not hesitate. Supporting the Bumba school in Rumphi seemed to be ideal. Every year Pietro Tomasini visited the students in Zollikon, showed them pictures of their project in Malawi, gave them an insight into development work and answered

their questions. In spring their teachers organised so-called Help Days. The students of the Buechholz school did small jobs for



Guaranteeing success: the headmistress of the school

firms, individual people and institutions and the payments they received were donated to the project. The local community of Zollikon also made regular financial donations.

Envy was in the air

Meanwhile the Bumba school was making fast progress. During one of the four phases



A strong commitment during the Help Days

the Döltschi school launched an additional fundraising event to help the project. Thanks

to the help from Zollikon and Zurich four school buildings with a total of nine classrooms, most of them with electric lighting, were built during the last four years. 1,050 books were bought, 140 desks were made and in the end two dilapidated flats for teachers were renovated. „The success rate in the final examinations is rising, the drop-out rate is falling, and it even happens that children who have already given up going to school come back“, the headmistress enthusiastically remarked. But not everybody was so pleased. „Why always the Bumba school?“, the directors of other schools in the town asked. Their schools are still in the



One of the new school buildings with classrooms

same situation Bumba was four years ago. When some children from other schools began to change over to Bumba, not only IPA, but also the minister of education and the IPA partner voted for a change in the project. Of course a lot more things could have been done for Bumba, but IPA would like to be fair and, above all, does not want to cause new problems such as „school tourism“. And so the Mlongoti school will soon have two new classrooms, financed by the village



Their chances have clearly improved

of Zollikon and the Buechholz school will have a partner town instead of only a partner school.

The Interview (Part 1)

A fantastic experience

What was your motivation to join the IPA junior team?

There were several projects by various NGOs which we could choose from. The IPA project seemed to be enormous and I was sceptical at first. There was another one which was much easier, we simply would have had to follow an established way. I could have chosen the easy option, but I saw a possibility to help others and make a significant difference. It is good to be open-minded and I do not regret my decision. It was a fantastic experience.

What were your impressions of the journey to Albania at the beginning of the project?

When I was younger, I travelled a lot with my parents and I had also seen poverty in Asia. Nevertheless, I was amazed to see such terrible living conditions in a country so near to Switzerland. I learnt to appreciate what we have here and I admired the Albanian people who try to be happy and positive despite their situation. In Switzerland we have a distorted picture of the Balkans and the people who live there. At the beginning I was afraid of a culture shock, but then it was a very positive experience because we were staying with host families, we were in the centre of their everyday life. Before the trip started, I could not imagine how a project process works. It was fascinating to see that you have to consider so many aspects. We were a cool group and we benefitted a lot from the trip. A lot of small things can have a big impact on your outlook.

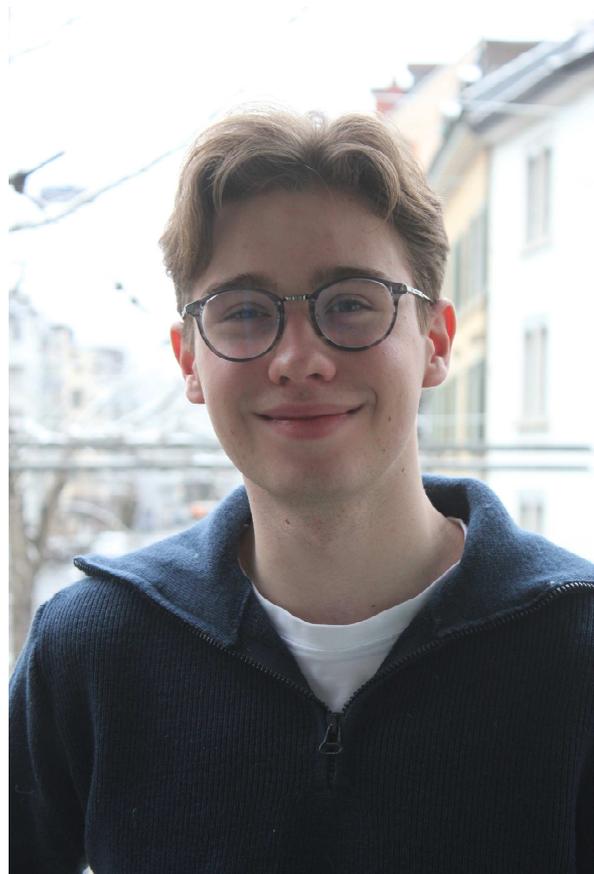
Was the cooperation within the team and the project management as you had expected them to be?

Well, I only had a vague idea what they should be like. Nicole Delavy, our junior leader, managed everything superbly. As a team we worked very well together and everybody came up with their own ideas. The result shows clearly that our cooperation worked well. Our team spirit was very good because we knew that we had all volunteered for the project.

You have donated all the money you earned as a skiing instructor to the junior project. Why?

Of course I could have kept it, but I would only have spent it. A donation is a great idea and for the Albanian people the money is worth much more. Helping others with money I have earned, makes me a lot happier than spending it on myself. I have never regretted donating the money.

Part 2 of the interview will follow in the next newsletter.



Kolja Lehmann, 18, lives in Zurich-Höngg and is a student at Rämibühl high school. He plays chess and the piano, sings, does sports (judo and tennis) and calls skiing his great passion. During the winter holidays and at weekends he works as a skiing instructor in Zuoz. He was a member of the IPA junior team 2019/2020.

Preview of forthcoming IPA projects

Ezondweni, North Malawi.

In the only state-run vocational school in the district of Mzimba North, young people cannot be properly trained for their professions. But at the same time it has a specific significance because the education programme focuses both on theory *and* practice. A project class at Enge high school wants to improve the situation.



Luzni and Hotesh, North Albania.

Junior teams like to go for combination projects. The present team 2020/2021 is dealing with questions concerning education and health. In the mountains of northern Albania two villages will be supported. In Luzni the school with pupils from year 1-9 is in need of almost everything, and in Hotesh the First Aid Station is in danger of collapsing. For the first time a junior project aims to build a small new building, so that sick people in Hotesh can receive medical help. To help the school, ten sub-projects have been planned.



- Swiss organisation for development cooperation with a branch in Beaconsfield, UK. Bulletin of ZEWO 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 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

Would you like to support IPA-UK as a donor?

Please contact Diana Wallace who would be happy to tell you more on dianawallacedtw@aol.com

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