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Dear donors, dear members!

“What is special about your job?” This question pops up again and again. Of course, the answer consists of a long list of issues that determine development cooperation. But after 25 years “in business” one constant is clear: Nothing is certain.

Nothing is permanent

The projects and general conditions (in the recipient countries as well as in Switzerland) are constantly changing. Parliaments pass laws, governments close down schools, partner organisations battle against crises, Swiss youngsters follow new trends, and in the county of Zurich the thousandth school reform is pushed through. And IPA? We adapt, change our strategy, work out new concepts, look for other partners and build them up. Sometimes this is tiresome, nerve wracking and connected with worries about the future. But we certainly do not suffer from a boring daily grind. As long as our organisation does not become rigid and it can react flexibly to new challenges, we will be happy to continue to offer our services.

Nicole Delavy
Managing Director IPA

Zurich, Switzerland

Lasting results of the student's commitment

On the occasion of its 25th anniversary year, IPA spoke to some former members of the junior team 2009/10. It turned out that sustainability does not only concern the projects abroad, but also had a huge effect on the Swiss youngsters.



A big moment in Pacomit: The juniors were shown a lot of gratitude

Ten years ago, a team of eight female students from various high schools in Zurich met for the first time at the IPA office in Zurich. The following 18 months were intensive, interesting and informative. Together with IPA, the girls travelled to Albania and planned a project for the renovation of a school in Pacomit. A year later all eleven subprojects had been completed by local craftsmen and the juniors were showered with the joy and gratitude by the Albanian people. The year in between, however, was packed with planning work, further education courses, fundraising events and innumerable project meetings in Zurich.



A meeting under the guidance of Nicole Delavy

But what has remained of all that, and has their commitment for IPA had a lasting effect on the young people? “Yes”, says Nicole Nickerson, “you are deeply impressed when you realise that it is possible to improve the life of people who are not as privileged as we are.” Noëmi Rhyner added: “I think that year has had a considerable influence on my character and my personality. I learnt not to be afraid of the unknown.” IPA is convinced that the juniors can gain professional as well as non-professional skills through their work. This is confirmed by Ms Rhyner who says: “Further things I learnt are teamwork, stamina and openness towards other cultures.”



Right in the middle: Junior Noëmi Rhyner in Skuraj, Albania

Intensified character traits

Many of the eight young women are today socially or politically engaged and at least for two of them the time with IPA influenced their professional career. “I think that this

project helped me to decide to go into the same direction”, says Noëmi Rhyner, and Nicole Nickerson adds: “I have always been a person with a strong need to engage with and help people in distress. IPA gave me the chance to deepen and to fulfil this wish for the first time.” Simone Müller is also convinced that the time with IPA strengthened and intensified her existing character traits.



At work in the office of IPA: Simone Müller (left) and Nicole Nickerson

The statements made by the young women clearly express that their work also fostered the reflection of their own privileged situation and the importance of democracy and social justice. “Our conversations concerning politics and Albanian’s history as a communist state made me realise how essential the political activities in Switzerland are, and how important it is to take part in votes and elections”, someone pointed out. Topics such as playing an active part in shaping today’s world are obviously vital for the young women. Nicole Nickerson sums it up: “Primarily it is important for me to do an ethically significant job which will hopefully improve the world a little.” “I like thinking back of that time”, says Simone Müller at the end. Other statements of the former juniors reveal clearly that much more has remained than simply good memories.



An inspection visit at the school in Pacomit

Mwaziko, North Malawi / Horgen, Switzerland

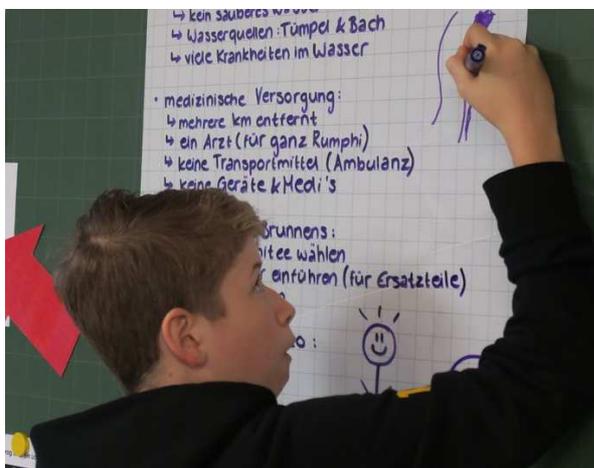
Together almost anything is possible

When school classes choose a project, they often decide to go in for the building of a drinking water well in Africa. This also happened at Horgen Secondary School. However what sounds like routine triggered off important changes on both sides.



Before the project was started there was no drinking water

During their project course lessons pupils can abandon their usual role and learn new skills. "Let's do the brainstorming together at the blackboard." "Together with my colleague I could shoot a film with my friend for Youtube, would that be feasible?" It was impressive how easily many students played their part, expressed ideas of their own and finally put them into practice. Then someone suggested to make a fundraising party for



It is important to know your own project well



Visiting the Rotary Club Sihltal

the well in the north of Malawi. They were all for it except one pupil who warned the others that this would cost a lot, cause plenty of work and hardly bring in any money. An exercise in the form of a calculation of profit soon proved that she was right. The disillusion was hard to bear, but they soon understood and accepted that such a party would not have been the right way to raise money. This was definitely a sign of early maturity and their motivation was not damaged in the least.



Training of the management committee in Mwaziko

But not all the tasks were easy to fulfil. Sometimes it was difficult to find the correct wording, they were at a temporary loss because recorded data could not be found again or they became exasperated with the Mac-computers they were not used to working with. The decisive sentence, however, appeared in one of the feedback-texts: „Together we were able to achieve everything”. In the end the class collected much more money than they had hoped for and the well in Malawi has been built. „It was super“, another feedback form said.

Relieved women in high positions

In July 2018 IPA representatives showed the people in Mwaziko a photograph of the class in Horgen. This was the starting signal for the project and a big moment for a village which had not had access to drinking water since 2004. Now work for the villagers really began. Bricks were fired, women carried water to the building site, they all helped wherever there was work to be done.



For the women the relief is enormous

When the drilling was completed and the pump installed, a management board had to be elected and trained. The villagers decided that six out of the ten members should be women. Finally there were seven. The well has strengthened their position in the village community and has given them new assignments and the authority to make decisions. At the same time it has relieved them considerably. „We have gained a lot of time and have become much calmer“, Ms Mkandawire summed up the improvements. The children benefit most, they are only rarely ill and now arrive at school on time. In the past they often missed the first lessons because they had to fetch water early in the morning.

The project has changed a great deal, both in the life of the inhabitants of Mwaziko as well as in the development of the youngsters in Switzerland. It is a pity that the Syl-

labus 21 forces schools in Switzerland to drastically reduce the number of project work lessons. During those you can gain really important additional skills.

Derven, North Albania / Hünenberg, Switzerland

ISZL: The beginning of a new partnership

The International School of Zug and Lucerne (ISZL) has for a long time been participating in the funding of a project in Albania. Now the previous partner school in Mamurras is being replaced by a school in Derven.

It was time for a change. The first partner school of ISZL in Mamurras had benefitted a lot from the continuous support and the visits from Switzerland. But there are still countless schools in Albania which are having big problems and are waiting for such a partnership. We chose the nine-year-school in Derven. An inspection inside a classroom showed the defects of the school building. Pietro Tomasini, co-managing director of IPA, was standing in a classroom, thinking that he had spotted the outsider of the class. The poor boy was sitting alone at his desk, while three others had to share one desk. Only when he got nearer did he realised that water was dripping on the boy's desk because it had been raining the previous day.



Not an outsider, but a victim of defects



The newly renovated roof

The roof was obviously leaking, there were no toilets for the 150 pupils and mold had spread all over the place. The list could easily be prolonged, but it was also the commitment of the teachers that turned the balance in favour of the school in Derven. Their enthusiasm for education showed us that they deserved help.



Students of the ISZL in an unfamiliar role

As usual with such projects, we start at the top. As long as rain can find its way into the classrooms, other sub-projects do not make sense. In summer 2018 IPA commissioned a building firm to renovate the roof completely. This was financed by ISZL, but also by a number of private and institutional donors.

The start of a new tradition?

In September ISZL travelled to Albania. A full schedule made many experiences possible, but the focus was on the visits and the personal encounters in Derven. The students who attend the school in Hünenberg taught the Albanian children English, played sports with them and were introduced to Albanian dancing in the evening. The great finale was a party at the school in Derven at which everybody joined in the dancing. „Our students would love to spend more time with

their new friends in Derven“, Charlotte Martin, their teacher, reported.

Perhaps the joy was even bigger on the other side. The children and youngsters as well as their teachers appreciated the exchange with the Albanian school. „We would be extremely happy if next time the students of the ISZL spent the nights with the families of school members“, said Ylli Dedea, the head-



The personal exchange is essential

master. As far as hospitality is concerned, Albanians are hard to beat. The visitors will certainly experience this when they have a meal with a local family next time. The new group can hardly wait for the second journey in autumn. For the first time they will also find toilets in the school. The hope of the people in Derven that the first visit will turn into a tradition, will be fulfilled for the next few years.



Joint dancing goes beyond all boundaries

The Interview

IPA is clearly structured

In 1994 you accompanied the first transport of goods to Gjirokastër. What memories do you still have?

I remember a lot of details, for example my host family and the meals we had together, very tasty and authentic. Also, our local partner, the students and the atmosphere in the partner school.

Was it not strange for you to be involved in such a mission together with your history teacher and his girlfriend?

Not at all. His history lessons were lively and interesting and he involved his students. Therefore, his commitment for a school in Albania did not come as a surprise. I found the “students help students-concept” convincing right from the start.

Did you, as a student, benefit from your journey and your mission?

I think so, it showed me that the political and economic situation in a state have a direct influence on the lives of the individual people. At the same time, I realised that our access to education and our liberal and reliable political system are also an obligation to assume responsibility.

Were you sorry when in 2001 IPA decided to give up the transports of aid goods?

I can understand this decision very well. In the end it is all about project work: to implement certain courses of action. The main point, in my opinion, is to include students in the projects.

In 2010 and 2015 you assisted IPA during their project work in Albania. What stood out for you?

IPA is clearly structured as far as the approach and the completion of the projects are concerned. I could see how the cumulative know-how of two decades was used lo-

cally and that there is still a lot of hard grafting done.

You are still willing to support members of IPA who travel to Albania. Why?

I am interested in the personal contact with members of IPA, but also in how IPA develops. How does project work abroad and in Switzerland change? It gives me the possibility to reflect on the time we live in and the social developments. And last but not least: I also think about my own position and the part I play in our society.



Alexander Wyss, 42, grew up in Wädenswil and was a student at Enge high school in Zurich. In 1994 and 1996 he travelled to Albania with the first transports of goods. Later he studied at the Federal Technical University (ETH) in Zurich. He is married, has a son, and lives in Helsinki.

Preview of forthcoming IPA projects

Kousseri, North Cameroon.

Because of the constant assaults by Boko Haram on the villages in the border area with Nigeria many children have become orphans or lost one parent. About forty of them attend the high school in Kousseri. They know that in their situation only a good education can open them the door to a better future. Being on their own means they need the support of IPA in order to succeed.



Izvor, South Albania.

The big school in this village is heading for a metamorphosis because this year's junior team has decided to support it. Smaller schools in the area are being closed down and the school in Izvor will become the centre of a whole region because it offers its students the whole curriculum, from the beginning to A-level exams. Plans for the project cover almost everything from the replacement of the windows to the renovation of a laboratory for lessons in natural science.



- 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 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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