



Supporting Social Entrepreneurship for Child Protection

The vast majority of Roma and Egyptian families in Albania are trapped in abject poverty. They live, largely outside of society, begging or scavenging. Their homes are unsanitary and unsafe (1 in 5 Roma families live in shacks)¹. When they become sick, they may struggle to afford the treatment they need. The children often go hungry and may need to work, begging in the streets or collecting metal and scraps, to try to help the family.

School attendance rates are low-girls worse than boys (54% of school age Roma children have never attended school while 43% aged 15-16 are illiterate)². Without an education, the cycle of poverty and discrimination risks being perpetuated across generations. Indeed, in correlation with poverty and social exclusion, most Roma and Egyptians in Albania work in low qualified jobs in the informal sector: 95.9% of the Roma and 88.7% of Egyptians in employment do not have employment contracts.³

These alarming observations have led Tdh and others to invest in supporting the development of child protection interventions and the building of a system to comprehensively address the needs and rights of the children most at risk and vulnerable to various forms of exploitation. This includes supporting and reinforcing civil society organizations to become stronger advocates and agents of change for these children.

In this context, Terre des hommes and CAAP have partnered to offer support to develop social enterprises to consolidate the work of the Embroidery Association and Romani Baxt in Albania.

Terre des hommes Albania has supported, through its NGO partner CAAP – Common Action Against Poverty, various Income-Generating Activities (IGA) for Roma and Egyptian families since 2006. They included supporting 2 social enterprises:

1. The Embroidery Association of Korçe

Established in 2006 with a two-fold purpose: a) to involve Roma mothers who are beneficiaries of Tdh projects in the production of handicrafts to generate incomes for their families; b) to establish a community active group of women that can serve as focus group discussion on child protection issues. The Association was supported by Tdh and CAAP to develop new designs and increase their sales in order to provide more significant incomes for mothers who were part of the project.

2. Paper recycling activities through Romani Baxt

The activities initiated in 2008 to support the local Roma NGO Romani Baxt. CAAP assisted Romani Baxt to set up a paper collection team, to rent a warehouse and an inventory of the collected materials, to establish collection points at the processing factories where paper is sold. In addition, a pressing machine and a truck were purchased to support the project. Tdh and CAAP supported Romani Baxt until 2012 with the objective to ensure a sustainable business and an increase in sales. Part of the profits generated through the paper recycling has been destined to finance the activities organized in the kindergarten run by Romani Baxt.

¹ A Needs Assessment Study on Roma and Egyptian Communities in Albania. Center for Economic and Social Studies. February 2012. UNDP

² Save the children Albania. Children Rights Situation. July 2013.

³ A Needs Assessment Study on Roma and Egyptian Communities in Albania. Center for Economic and Social Studies. February 2012. UNDP



A **results review** was implemented by the consultants Anila Vendresha and Iva Sinani to evaluate the results of the **Income-Generating activities (IGA)** implemented by Tdh in two dimensions: the generation of sustainable incomes and child protection. Specifically, the researchers focused in answering two key questions:

- **Can social enterprises lead to more sustainable incomes for beneficiary families?**
- **Can social enterprises contribute to the protection of children?**



Main Findings

Knitting their Future – The Embroidery Association of Korçe



- **Part time jobs were created for women** members of the poorest and most marginalised Roma and Egyptian communities in Korçe and who prior to this were engaged in precarious activities like begging.

- **Contributed to improve cash incomes** – The income for the part time job of around 4 hours a day varied between 6000 – 12 000 ALL/ month (60 – 120 USD). Although modest, this is comparable to other local low skilled workers wages in Albania. The number of women in embroidery activity rose from 7 to 15. They all developed technical skills in knitting, embroidering and handicrafts.

- **A step change in the position of women** – Working outside their homes, becoming part of an association, having a common place for social interaction and to learn about health, education and family relationships increased their confidence also to discuss community needs that the association would raise



with municipality and in different forums.

- **Difficulties to thrive in a changed market** – The economic crises in Greece had multiple implications in the market demand for handmade products of the Embroidery Association. The closure of a number of 'à façon' businesses, a reduction of consumers/ buyers interest for specific tailored made handicraft for the Greek market and limited business capacities, especially in market research and in developing a new business and marketing strategy, made it difficult for the embroidery business to reinvent itself in the changed market.
- **Changes in the situation of children** were noted during the project implementation such as better living in their household through the economic support of their mothers and better education during school years and through summer activities.

Sustain through recycling - Social entrepreneurship of Romani Baxt

- **The business has been self-sustained** since the end of Tdh funding in 2012 although still with a modest annual turnover. It has expanded and diversified its clients base/supply sources, from 10 in 2009 to currently 50 clients.
- **Contributed to improve cash incomes** – The paper recycling activity provides job for four household heads from the Roma community of Kinostudio area in Tirana. The monthly salary of 150 ALL/ month (150 USD) is the main source of income for their families. Currently Romani Baxt is unable to cover social and health insurances for their employees.
- **Need to catalyze scaling-up and diversification** – It has been hard to scale up the project to a mature recycling business, diversifying partnership with recycling factories (currently they supply only one), or diversifying the materials they process. Some obstacles may include: Albania 's lack of infrastructure for waste management, space for storage and selection, costs for mechanical infrastructure required, as well lack of staff to help grow the business by reaching new clientele, and challenging income flows (delays between delivery of goods and payments)
- **Contributed to fund educational activities for children** – To date, part of income is used to support a kindergarten (food and heating costs) helping annually 25 children 3-5 years old who are being prepared to enrol in public kindergartens.



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