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# Supporting Social Entrepreneurship in Albania to Better Protect Children





# **Supporting Social Entrepreneurship in Albania to Better Protect Children**

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Special thanks go to former Terre des hommes field staff for facilitating the field visits and for sharing their views.

# Acronyms

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Tdh	Terre des hommes
CAAP	Common Actions Against Poverty
TACT	Transnational Actions against Child Trafficking project
IGA	Income Generation Activities
EA	Embroidery Association
RB	Romani Baxt
CCG	Community Counselling Group
CPSN	Child Protection Safety Net
MoES	Ministry of Education & Sports
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
HH	Household
VET	Vocational Education & Training

\*\* Note: names used in the case studies have been changed to ensure confidentiality



# Executive Summary



The vast majority of Roma and Egyptian families living 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)<sup>1</sup>. When they become sick, they may struggle to afford the treatment they need. The children often go hungry and may need to work, beg in the streets or collect metals 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)<sup>2</sup>. 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 these children most at risk and vulnerable to various forms of exploitation.

From 2006 to 2012, Terre des hommes (Tdh), in collaboration with Common Actions Against Poverty (CAAP), implemented a programme to encourage 'Income Generating Activities' and offer an economic alternative to extreme poverty for some of the most vulnerable families.

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

<sup>2</sup> Save the children Albania. Children Rights Situation. July 2013. <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/start/countries/albania>

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



Three different projects were launched under the umbrella of 'Income Generation Activities' - IGA:

- Subsidized microloans to families in marginalized communities spread across the country to support self-entrepreneurship.
- Support to the Embroidery Association for Roma and Egyptian mothers in Korce
- Support for the Romani Baxt paper recycling business in Tirana

This programme was designed to be 'a hand up, not a hand out' and aimed to offer an alternative to piecemeal work - bringing no security and little money - or perpetual non-profit or state aid, or total dependency on donors' support. At the heart of the organizations' objectives was the belief that bringing extra income and increased security into a family would bring benefits to the children: money to buy food and medicine but money too to free the child from the need to bring in money. If a child has to work to supplement a family's income or if the money simply isn't enough to allow them to go to school, then their education suffers or sometimes never gets started and the children are exposed to risks of abuse and exploitation and deprived of their fundamental rights. Without education, the children stand little chance of securing the employment that would allow them to break out of poverty. Without education, they may be excluded from society or miss out on access to the safety nets that society puts in place to protect the most vulnerable.

This report looks at two of the three projects that were implemented by Terre des hommes Albania in partnership with CAAP under the umbrella of 'Income Generation Activities' - IGA:

- Support to the Embroidery Association for Roma and Egyptian mothers in Korce
- Support for the Romani Baxt paper recycling business in Tirana
- Lessons from the subsidized microloans to families in marginalized communities spread across the country to support self-entrepreneurship can be found in a separate document (*Learnings from subsidized micro-lending project for promoting child care and protection in marginalized communities*)

One year after the end of Terre des hommes and CAAP's support to these two projects, Terre des hommes conducted a review between January and April of 2014, to try to find the answers to two key questions in the context of these projects and to see whether the model of offering assistance to social enterprises could be applicable more widely in Child Protection interventions. The review also looked at the sustainability of the two small social enterprises supported. The researchers talked to all parties involved in the projects and conducted field reviews in Tirane and Korce.

The key questions tentatively answered included:

1. Can social enterprises lead to more sustainable incomes for beneficiary families?
2. Can social enterprises contribute to the protection of children?

## **Social enterprises to contribute to child protection**

Overall, what can be assessed as largely positive is the empowerment and status of drivers of change that both civil society organizations have gained by being supported to implement social enterprises' activities and advocating for children's rights and protection.

### ***Embroidery Association in Korce***

The Embroidery Association was established in the last quarter of 2006, aiming to involve Roma and Egyptian mothers in producing handicrafts to generate income for their families. It also established an active community of women to discuss and act upon child protection issues.

The **review** found that:

- During project implementation, part-time jobs were created for some of the poorest and most marginalized Roma and Egyptian women, generating incomes comparable to low-skilled workers' wages in Albania. These jobs were perceived by the women to be much more dignified than their previous, precarious activities, such as begging.
- Working outside their homes and becoming part of an association, according to the women, improved their social interaction, as well as their knowledge of health education and family relationships. They became more confident discussing the community's needs for schools & infrastructure and raising those issues with the municipality and in various public fora.
- The increased income was reported as leading to better living conditions for the women's children, with improved school attendance during the school year and organized summer activities.
- The support of CAAP and Tdh was crucial in promoting the Association to an array of private, public and international organizations. The Municipality of Korce provided, free-of-charge, premises in an historic building that is part of the town's heritage and which can offer a business advantage to the Embroidery Association.
- The economic crisis in Greece had big implications for the market demand for the Embroidery Association's handmade products. Client fashion companies closed and Greek buyers evaporated, ultimately leaving the Association struggling to stay afloat.

By 2013, the association was being pulled in two directions, trying to balance itself between its social and advocacy activities and its business activity. The former is proving more resilient than the latter. Having said that, it is still going on, even after the Tdh and CAAP project ended. Over time, the strength of their advocacy and representation at local and regional levels has become significant. This is a considerable achievement for the management and membership of the Embroidery Association. It is also positive that, in a very challenging funding environment for NGOs and social businesses, the Embroidery Association has secured some small grants to allow individuals to keep making and selling their handicrafts. Like many businesses, and now is a time for the Embroidery Association to regroup and possibly reinvent itself with new designs and a marketing push that emphasises its social roots.

### ***Paper recycling - Romani Baxt***

The paper-recycling project started in 2008 with a local Roma NGO, Romani Baxt. Tdh and CAAP supported Romani Baxt in setting up a paper collection team, renting a warehouse and in establishing collection points. They also provided a crushing/pressing machine and a truck to help professionalize the business.

The paper recycling business generates income that is used to partially fund a Roma kindergarten and summer camps for Roma children. It also provides jobs for low-skilled Roma people. Finally it should not be forgotten that it makes a larger contribution to waste management

through its recycling.

The **review** found that:

- The business has been self-sustaining since the end of Tdh funding in 2012, although annual turnover is modest. It has expanded and diversified its clientele/supply sources, from 10 in 2009 to 50 clients in 2014.
- The recycling activity provides job for four heads of household from the Roma community in the Kinostudio area of Tirana (one of the poorest neighborhood). The monthly salary of 15,000 ALL per month (150 USD) is the main source of income for their families. However, at present Romani Baxt is unable to cover social and health insurance for the employees.
- Funds from the recycling business go towards a Roma children's summer camp and heating and food for the Roma kindergarten that every year helps twenty five, 3 to 5 year old children prepare to enter mainstream education.
- The recycling project has raised awareness of Romani Baxt among the donor community and has enabled the organization to build a network and submit proposals for other social activities that benefit Roma children. Romani Baxt has also joined the coalition of child rights organizations, BKTF - and is part of a movement that goes beyond Roma issues – this adds weight to their advocacy.

With the limited funds available, it has been difficult to scale-up the project to a mature recycling business. Diversification into materials other than paper would take investment and would need extra space. Although the money that the recycling activity generates is undoubtedly put to good use, the business has also clearly hit a ceiling and would require further investment.

In both cases, although the two small enterprises continue and their influence on child protection issues is evident, it appears that a longer term accompaniment would be necessary to ensure full sustainability of their businesses.

# Scope of this Review

## Aim of the Review

The review was conducted to assess the results of different types of Income Generation Activities in two aspects:

- Generation of sustainable incomes - did IGA lead to sustainable incomes?
- Child protection – did IGA contribute to the protection of children?

Articulated around these two focuses, this review identifies key success factors and challenges and offers lessons on the income-generating tool as a way to improve the protection of children. Based on this, Tdh Albania may identify future areas of intervention and involvement on income-generation for vulnerable families.

**Locations** - The review was conducted in the two locations that formed part of the project: Tirana: For Romani Baxt's recycling work, the visit took place at the Recycling centre and at the kindergarten in Tirana administrative Unit No.4. Semi-structured interviews were held with the Association Head and also in a group discussion with employees.

Korce: For the Embroidery Association. The visit included a small group meeting, an interview with the Head of the Embroidery Association and a visit to the premises of the Association where some samples of craftwork were displayed.

## Methodology and Limitations

The methodology included tools/ approaches to ensure that beneficiaries, stakeholders, management team of CAAP and Tdh, fully participated in the process. The review was conducted in close collaboration with Terre des hommes, Albania and with CAAP (Common Action Against Poverty).

## Tools

**Desk review** – It included a review of relevant documents provided by Tdh and CAAP at the start of the review. During the review other relevant documents were reviewed as necessary.

**Meetings/Interviews/Focus Groups with key stakeholders** – Stakeholders were interviewed based on individual semi-structured interviews/meetings as well as through focus group techniques based on the discussion guide. When it wasn't feasible to meet in person, feedback was received via teleconference and email. A list of stakeholders is in Annex I, Table 2

**Discussion Guide** – Semi structured interviews and discussion guides were prepared to solicit information from stakeholders. The main use of these tools was to guide the review through balanced and unbiased interviews.

**Field Visits** – Field visits were organized in all project locations of IGAs and helped ensure the participation of beneficiaries, individuals, male and female, households and organizations in the review process.

Participatory methods were used during the field review, including:

- Semi-structured interviews with beneficiaries - this consisted of individual meetings and family-based discussion around key open-ended questions.
- Case studies – this consisted of collecting information by talking to beneficiaries around key areas of interest (human interest as well as fact-based information) and by observation. When relevant, children were asked a few questions, especially around school attendance.
- Focus group discussions based on a discussion guide with Embroidery Association members and with Romani Baxt employees.
- Photographs and audio recordings were taken for key questions, when this was possible and agreed with beneficiaries.

**Reporting** - During the report writing, particular attention was given to documenting the impact of IGAs, both in terms of income and livelihoods, as well as well in terms of child protection. The intention has been, where valid, to document and highlight positive experience in the life of beneficiaries. A draft report was shared with the Reference Group to get their inputs and feedback. Finalisation of the report included relevant feedback by the implementers.

## Reference Group

The reference group for this review comprised: Sendrine Constant, Tdh Representative for Albania; Blerta Spahiu, Tdh Programme Manager, Iva Sinani, Program Manager, CAAP. Its role extended to all phases of the review including:

- Identifying information needs, defining objectives and delimiting the scope of the review;
- Providing input on the planning documents, (Work Plan and communication, methodology, discussion guide);
- Facilitating the participation of those involved in the review;
- Facilitating access to all information and documentation relevant, as well as to key actors and informants who should participate in interviews, focus groups or other information-gathering methods;
- Monitoring the quality of the process, documents and report that is generated, so as to enrich these with their input and ensure that they address their needs for information
- Disseminating the results of the evaluation, especially among organizations and entities within their interest groups.

## Key Limitations

This result review is conducted more than a year after completion of the projects. During this period, the external context and also the situation of targeted households and organizations have changed. Therefore this results review should not be considered as a real-time evaluation but rather a review of longer-term effects of the project on the households' economies and on children's protection, particularly school attendance. It also looks at the project's longer-term impact on economic activities and organizational aspects of two, targeted, local NGOs. A baseline database was not available at the time of review. This would have provided a

good basis for comparative analysis and means that some of the results and conclusions are based on the respondents' recollections and some desirable statistics are missing. The time available for the review was limited to allow for comprehensive analysis of every aspect of IGAs implementation.

# Presentation of the Interventions - Their Implementation and Main Findings

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## The Embroidery Association to Support Deprived Women

The Embroidery Association (EA) was established to provide a modest alternative employment solution for Roma mothers from the city of Korçe by giving them the opportunity to use traditional skills to create sustainable income sources. The economic empowerment through handicrafts aims to: contribute to increasing household incomes, highlight women's contribution and thus strengthen their roles as mothers and protectors of their children. EA's purpose, from its foundation in 2006, was that, alongside the production of handicrafts, it would also offer Roma mothers a forum in which they could discuss child protection issues. When it was first established the Association had a dual purpose: to give the women the opportunity to produce handicrafts and generate modest incomes for their families and to establish an active community group of women that can serve as a focus group for discussion of child protection issues.

The project supported Embroidery Association members in the design, production, marketing and selling of handicrafts in Albania and abroad and the money generated was intended to help provide better education, food and shelter for their children and create better lives for themselves and their families. In between or during business activities, members also function as a support group; discussing daily problems and child protection issues such as childcare, education, hygiene and protection against HIV/AIDS.

A majority of the members of the Association are from communities where Terre des hommes operates, mainly from families with elevated rates of children dropping out of school or carrying out street work. Today the Association comprises 15 women (and some of their young daughters), who are in a similar situation of household poverty and are short of the resources to provide better food and shelter for their children.

When it was first created many of the women had little or no education at all. Through training, they have now deepened their knowledge (of handicraft production and child protection) and identified skills they were not aware of.

During the project, the women worked out of premises provided for free by the municipality



of Korce. CAAP and Tdh staff have worked with the local authorities for a number of years and that good relationship helped secure the location. EA's new premises are located in the very centre of the city, making it accessible for other women who want to be involved, as well as accessible and prominent for customers.

**Product Design** – Over a number of years, CAAP has collaborated with Peace Corps Volunteers all over Albania. During this project, a Peace Corps volunteer based in Korce supported EA to improve the product design. The volunteer steered the organization towards designing more market driven products that would be more attractive to a wider range of buyers.



**Marketing and Sales** – CAAP has supported the Association by training the manager, members and salesperson in sales and negotiation skills and by providing ideas on how to network, and how to make products aimed at specific market sectors (e.g. tourists). Pictures of EA products have been advertised on CAAP's website. A catalogue has been designed for this purpose, also published on CAAP's website, and which is updated every six months. CAAP staff also helped the Association to take part in regional fairs, establishing new contacts for selling the products and finding new clients.

**Business and financial management** – CAAP staff have worked with the Association on budgeting, marketing and sales, to ensure members could spend less time in administration and more time in income generation. CAAP has continued its assistance to EA in fundraising. In this regard, CAAP staff have been writing proposals, working on raising EA's visibility and expanding its contacts. Association members received basic business training, whereas the manager of the organization attended training aimed at increasing her capacities as a leader and a manager. Through these training sessions, members of the Embroidery Association gained knowledge on marketing and selling techniques and on financial management.



**Monitoring** – The EA was due to send CAAP monthly reports that showed the amount of income generated for each individual member of the association. This hasn't always happened, however CAAP has been carrying out field visits every two months in order to talk to the Association members and monitor any progress and change for their children and family.

## Embroidery Association – Main Findings

From 2006 until late 2010, The Embroidery Association did well. It provided part-time jobs and income for the association members, with the intended knock-on effect on their families and children's well-being. During project implementation, part-time jobs were created for some of the poorest and most marginalized Roma and Egyptian women. This was much more dignified work for the women who prior to this were engaged in more precarious activities. The income for the part-time work (around 4 hours a day), varied between 6000 and 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, embroidery and handicrafts.

Working outside their homes and becoming part of an association brought huge changes to the women's lives. They had a place where they could meet and interact with other like-minded women, a space to share with each other issues of concern and also a chance to improve their knowledge on health, education of children, relationships in the family etc. They gained the confidence to discuss the community's needs for better schools and infrastructure, issues that the Association would raise with the municipality and in different forums.

The support of CAAP during the project was seen as crucial in building links to what would be their market and in the promotion of the association to an array of private, public and international organizations. They developed relationships with local institutions, with market players and with communities. The Municipality of Korce provided, free-of-charge, premises for their use in the pedestrianized street in the centre of town, within a heritage building.

### Most Significant Outcome

*Beyond the income generation, the Association's scope has expanded beyond its embroidery activities. More than 7 years after its establishment the Embroidery Association remains engaged in issues affecting Roma and Egyptian women, children and communities and acts to highlight those issues faced by some of the most vulnerable groups and communities.*

*It has become a voice for Roma and Egyptian women in the Korce region and amongst local NGOs. Although the economic activity of the Association faced significant challenges and setbacks, the Association itself continued even after the Tdh and CAAP project ended. Over the years they have gone from strength to strength, especially their advocacy and representation amongst CSOs at a regional level. Despite its own difficulties, the Association is still helping individual women to produce by supplying them with raw materials and by promoting their products, even after the project has ended and while operating in a challenging funding environment for NGOs and social business.*

Changes to the children's situation were noted during the project implementation such as better living conditions in their household through the economic support of their mothers and more consistent attendance in education during the school year and through the summer activities.

However, from 2010, the economic crises in neighbouring Greece started to have an impact on the local economy and on the labour market of Korce, given its links and dependency on Greek investment. A significant number of fashion businesses closed down, resulting in a drop in demand for made-to-order products supplied by the Embroidery Association. The orders from individual traders selling to the Greek market also dropped. The economic situation also meant that people were less likely to purchase or order, high value hand-made products; instead, if they were buying at all, it was cheaper, machine-made alternatives, easily available in the local shops.

For the duration of the project, CAAP support was essential to create links with organizations and institutions that subsequently purchased the Embroidery Association's products... but when the project ended, this intermediary role was no longer possible. At present, trade activity for women members of the Embroidery Association is through individual sales or participation in the fairs. Yet, waiting to sell at fairs is not a satisfactory option, nor does it bring any significant income for the women.

Under such a drastic change in the market and in the operating context it would be difficult for any business activity to survive, let alone a small, novel, social entrepreneurship such as the embroidery activity. The Association has done some limited market scanning, but no comprehensive market research for embroidery products was conducted due to a lack of money. They were configured to respond to the pre-crisis market such as fashion businesses that were their main clients. The changed context demands agility for the Embroidery Association to reinvent itself based on a comprehensive understanding of the market, developing a new business strategy and business model. Limited technical skills and design assistance may also have been a limiting factor in responding to the changes in the market.

The Association has modest financial resources, with limited donor funding, this makes it difficult for them to be able to simultaneously address their embroidery, social and advocacy activities. Hence the business aspect was less resilient.

To date, however, the Association has been able to continue to make small grants to help women purchase raw materials so that they are able to continue producing embroidery at home. Over the years, the interest amongst Roma and Egyptian women has increased. Initially there were 7 women; now membership has increased to 15 embroiderers, while, paradoxically, the market for their products has diminished significantly.

## Recommendations for Embroidery Association

**Reinvent** and adapt its business activity to the new market. This would require comprehensive market research, validation of business feasibility, accompanied by a clear business strategy, focusing on a) product development including contemporary design, developing quality standards that meet market demands and an attempt to anticipate some trends in craft design; b) development of a business model appropriate to the new market.

**Quick wins** can be obtained by diversifying with other simple processes e.g. stamping, aromatic dried flowers, soap production and stone decoration.

**Maximize** use of the Association's premises, located in the pedestrianized street in the centre

of town in an important building that is part of the city's architectural heritage and which features in travel guides for Korce. This asset could be used to create a 'tourist spot' in Korce, where visitors can visit, see and buy the products and also watch and take photos from the balcony of nearby attractions such as the Cathedral, the building in front of embroidery centre that was the first Albanian school, villa Themistokli (the house of Themistokli Gërmenji) next door, etc.

**Marketing** of the association, its products and its social function. This can be done collaboratively with other more specialized organizations that can offer pro-bono support and mentoring to allow the organization to mature. It is important especially to appeal to donors with well-articulated plans and to build a professional, trendy, image that reflects the social value of the Association and that is attractive to a range of potential customers.

# Paper Recycling Business to Support the Kindergarten “ Romani Baxt



Terre des hommes has worked with different stakeholders to fight child trafficking and exploitation. Up until 2006, Tdh had not entered in to any partnerships with Roma organizations and Tdh made then the decision that it was important to enter into partnerships with Roma organizations, even if/when their capacity was limited. This was felt to be important in order to build trust and legitimacy and support empowerment. Among these organizations was Romani Baxt, a local Roma organization working to respond to Roma families' and Roma children's needs.

Tdh started the collaboration with Romani Baxt with the organization of summer schools that, it was hoped, would help raise awareness of the dangers of human trafficking, exploitation and child begging, especially during the summer period. Daily, over the summer, 60 children



attended these schools. Beside the entertainment, training and psychosocial services offered, representatives of institutions, such as the police, were invited to provide information to help vulnerable children.

Working with Roma organizations, Tdh was open to support what other donors were not, and helped the organization to think about their financial future, recognizing that local NGOs had less funding to offer and there was little money being offered by national sources. This discussion led to the idea of Romani Baxt becoming a professional collector of recyclable materials. The intention was that any income that was generated would be used to fund activities for Roma children and the organization's costs and would help create jobs for people from the community. Tdh and CAAP supported the business idea and helped sharpen and shape it but the business idea originated by Romani Baxt itself.

The aim of the recycling initiative was to support the Roma community living in the area of Kinostudio (Administrative Unit No. 4, Tirana) by supporting Romani Baxt in its work to promote Roma education, offering activities for Roma children, creating jobs for Roma people and improving the environment while offering an alternative to the fragile donor dependency for the service delivery of Romani Baxt.

Unfortunately the number of people engaged in this social business was less than expected. The main reason for this was the lack of equipment and the recent municipality regulations which forbid individuals collecting recyclable materials.

# Paper Recycling Business of Romani Baxt – Main Findings

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Tdh and CAAP's support for the recycling activity started in 2008 and continued until 2012. More than five years on from the start, Romani Baxt still operates the recycling activity. It became the first Roma organization to obtain an environmental licence. The business has been self-sustaining since the end of Tdh funding, although still only with a modest annual turnover (approx. 12 000 USD). Over the five year period, Tdh's financial support for the recycling operation reduced gradually from 75% to 50%, to 25% in the last year, until recycling started to sustain its own operation.

Tdh covered the costs of the mechanical infrastructure including a truck for transportation, a pressing machine and rent of a warehouse; whereas training and technical support was provided through CAAP. This support was important to strengthen the organization in areas such as recycling, book-keeping and communication with business partners. CAAP also helped in establishing links with potential buyers, such as administration offices, foreign and Albanian organizations, and private businesses. CAAP also assisted RB in writing the proposal for this project that led to the investment of money into the machinery and a truck.

It has expanded and diversified its client base/supply sources, from 10 in 2009 to currently 50 clients. Starting with some schools and a commercial bank, they have diversified to Universities, International Organizations, wholesale markets, embassies and large businesses. They supply pressed paper of all types to Edipack, a multi-national recycling and packaging enterprise.



At present, the recycling activity provides jobs for four heads of household from the Roma community of the Kinostudio area in Tirana, including a driver and three collectors. The monthly salary of 15000 ALL per month (150 USD) is the main source of income for their family. However, Romani Baxt is still unable to cover social and health insurances for their employees.

### Most Significant Outcome

*Romani Baxt has continued to provide educational activities for children with the funds gained from their recycling activities. Throughout the project, Romani Baxt was able to contribute to summer camps for Roma children, activities for Roma Day, and for New Year, which were partially funded by the income generated from recycling. To date, even though the income is modest and costs, especially for fuel, are high, part of income raised through recycling is used to support the Roma kindergarten with food and heating.*

Recognition of Romani Baxt amongst the donor community, through the recycling project, has enabled the organization to build contacts and submit proposals for other social activities that benefit Roma children.

As indicated by Romani Baxt, in addition to more direct results achieved through the recycling project, a number of projects supported by donors such as, Roma Education Funds, Terre des hommes, Cordaid etc, focusing on children's education, led to a significant reduction in the number of children forced to beg in the Administrative Unit 4 – Kinostudio community of Tirana. Romani Baxt indicates that in 2000, there were 150 – 200 children from the community engaged in begging. This had dropped significantly to 16 – 20 children begging at present. Children that went through the kindergarten and were integrated into the public school system have gone on to attend school beyond the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, which used to be the upper level of education for Roma children, especially for girls.

Romani Baxt has also joined the coalition of child rights organizations – and is part of a movement that goes beyond Roma issues – this gives them more influence in their advocacy.

The support of Tdh to sharpen and materialize the business idea was critical for Romani Baxt. Financial sustainability of NGOs through their own economic activity is both new and difficult in an Albanian context. NGOs have neither been prepared, nor have they had the capacity to run a business in addition to their daily social activities. This is coupled with a lack of funds to provide mentoring and coaching during the business start-up phase.

Individuals involved were a key factor to the results. Key Tdh staff and later a CAAP manager were crucial due to the business mind-set and networking skills which they brought with them which otherwise wouldn't have been accessible to a Roma NGO.

## Recommendations for Romani Baxt

**Strategic approach** – It is clear that Romani Baxt recycling staff know their market and the stakeholders they deal with in both the public and private sector, yet, it will be beneficial for

Romani Baxt to develop a disciplined, long-term planning and business strategy. This will help them to present their case and their plans in a well-articulated fashion to donors and to local and central government.

**Injection of energy** – Romani Baxt should continue to tap into opportunities offered by working with schools. This was done to a certain extent at the start of the project but stopped due to the costs involved to collect from individual schools. Instead it can be better done through an organized and coordinated approach with Government institutions such as Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Environment and the Municipality of Tirana, as well as with other organizations that have specific marketing and environmental backgrounds. The idea would be, for example, to set a specific date (or days) when schools can focus on recycling and encourage children and parents through interactive activities to bring books, papers, and other recycled materials into school. A good moment would be the end of school year, before the Christmas season or during the Earth day in April 22. Whereas it is difficult and costly for Romani to go and pick up small loads of paper from individual schools, it will be easier to pick in different schools within the same day, economising on transport and organizational costs. Moreover Romani Baxt can use these days to promote the “Reduce, reuse, recycle” slogan. It’s hope that this strategy could inject new income and energy into the business while indirectly contributing to promoting Romani Baxt and allowing interaction between Roma and non-Roma children in a more fun and engaging manner.

**Diversification** – Whereas there has been an intention to include plastic or other recycling materials in the business, it appears that this would require some significant investment. In the meantime Romani Baxt can think how they can maximize on some existing resources e.g. producing pens with recycled packaging materials, or design small boxes for gift packaging etc.

**Anticipate trends and work strategically with Municipality** – At present in Albania and in the capital, Tirana, there is almost no separation of waste. Although a move in this direction would be convenient for Romani Baxt and for other collectors, there is also a risk that larger businesses would then become interested. Their interest could threaten RB. It is therefore important that Romani Baxt makes a case on the social and economic benefits for local government and central government to engage Roma social businesses for any contracts. Romani also needs to plan for an effective, lean structure and high standards of business ethics so they can be competitive and the partner of choice for the municipality itself and for other suppliers of recycled materials.

# Annexes

## Overview of the Implementing Organizations

**Common Actions against Poverty (CAAP)** has become a well-known organization in providing economic empowerment for vulnerable families; to help families and individuals bring themselves out of poverty. It was created in October 2008 to administer Income Generating Activities, including the subsidized microloan project set out above. CAAP has developed training curricula, strategic partnerships and business models that give hardworking Albanians the skills and resources they need to build a better life. Over the past year it has partnered with Terre des hommes (Tdh) to help raise permanently the standard of living of more than 150 people in the country; matching workers with jobs, encouraging entrepreneurship and connecting families with social services. In the frame of the Child Protection Safety Net (CPSN) Project, Terre des hommes has collaborated with CAAP to extend the economic benefits to beneficiaries and respond to community needs in all the areas where CPSN project has been active.

Operating in Albania since 1993, **Terre des hommes (Tdh)** has established a network of protection for children. Its direct interventions are aimed at consolidating the national system of child protection and offering complete and long-lasting solutions. In 2013, 6,704 people benefited from the activities that were implemented.




In Albania, significant gaps in policy measures, services and resources hinder the integral protection of children from mistreatment, exploitation, abandonment and trafficking. Tdh is working to ensure that the protective mechanisms for children constitute an integral part of social institutions and educates communities to act on the behalf of children.





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