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Dear donors, dear members!

With the usual delay of two years the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) published the statistics of Swiss Foreign Aid. In 2019

IPA was the second largest Swiss relief organisation in Albania, measured by privately generated donations. The list is not much longer. Only eight NGOs were still active in the country in 2019, most of them with small budgets. Is this good or bad news?

Number 2 in Albania

As it often is, the figures alone are not simply good or bad. Since the new government took over in 2013, the situation in Albania has constantly been improving, which is good. At the same time there is still such a lot of work to do that the help of a few NGOs cannot meet the demands, which is bad. Where we are positioned on such a ranking list is not important for us. We would rather be towards the bottom of the list knowing that the people really get the support they so badly need. What counts for us is that our help is appreciated. This motivates us and our junior team much more than a position at the top of the list.

Pietro Tomasini
Managing Director IPA

Murunda, North Malawi

Changing a project at a difficult time

The planning was completed and fundraising was well under way when IPA was informed about a project of the KfW Development Bank in the same location. We had to react quickly.

The attitude of the students at Wohlen high school showed clearly that this project was very important to them. The main event during their fundraising campaign was a volleyball night. Although they had probably underestimated the necessary efforts, the event was a real success. In their commitment to the project, they were supported by a group of youngsters who had taken part in the Soazza environmental project in 2019. Together they had made big plans, the refurbishment and expansion of the medical centre of Kaweche in Malawi. The budget of over CHF 100,000 was a challenge which they readily accepted. They had thought of



Inside the maternity ward - before the project was started

everything, structural measures, fixtures and fittings, equipment, a refrigerator powered

by solar energy and further education courses. More than half the money was ready to be invested when we received an email



Volleyball night: everything was well organised



Presentation in front of the ABZ-solidarity fund

from our local partner in Malawi. „KfW is working on a big project in Kaweche“, he wrote, „work has already begun“. The IPA office in Zurich had to react very quickly. Further enquiries were sent to Malawi and we tried to contact KfW. They told us that there had been a preliminary as well as an overall study. The project had been planned as part of an even bigger programme and all the local people concerned had known it. However IPA had not been informed, neither by the Minister of Health for the region nor by the locals, not to mention the staff of Kaweche Health Centre. They probably all thought it was better to have two projects than none because they had been let down in the past.

Happy beneficiaries

There was nothing we could do, and the proposal of KfW to suspend the IPA project for the time being and later to add it to their own (with a budget of a million Euros) was not convincing. The only possible decision

was therefore to find another project. After all we had seen similar medical stations during previous visits. Now we had to explain the new, unfortunate situation to the class in Wohlen and the institutional donors. Luckily they were all very flexible and agreed to support an other medical centre. The Jalawe Health Centre in Murunda subsequently inherited the project. Finally the station which cares for 6,500 people has running water, medical equipment, adequate facilities, solar energy and even a house with two flats for members of staff. The re-



The new house for members of staff

sults were immediately visible. The Minister of Health for the region sent more nursing staff so that the patient care improved considerably. „I am very pleased with your help“, he said, „some of the equipment can-



Further education as part of the project

not even be found in the district hospital“. The Nyasa Times reported about a small ceremony and the young Swiss can look

forward to an interesting final presentation. IPA will soon pay a visit to the district hospital.

Sopot, North Albania

Hope for development

Poverty stricken, isolated and full of social problems. These are the keywords that sum up the school in Sopot. For three years IPA has been fighting for a project to better the chances for the children.

„During our leisure time we look after the many children who grow up in particularly difficult situations.“ The teacher told us in 2016 about the commitment of her colle-



The children are telling sad stories

gues despite the hopeless situation. A lot of children have no structure at home and grow up in poverty. The divorce rate has increased enormously and many parents are unable to cope due to a mental disability. The teachers are expected to help, but when we saw the school building for the first time things were clear. There was nothing but misery and a building in decay. We gave the project top priority, but then a new director was elected. Uninterested and listless, he was just waiting for his retirement. Nobody could understand why the young, hard-working headmistress had been replaced. Although we understand the situation of the children, IPA is not willing to make any compromises in such cases. If people can not guarantee that the renovated parts of a school and the materials provided are looked after properly, IPA shelves a project.

When the director retired in 2018, IPA was ready to look at the situation again.



Before the project: rainwater inside the school building

A race against COVID-19

This time the project really started. A number of generous private donors were willing to support the year 1-9 school during several phases. The list of problems however had not become any shorter. Water was leaking everywhere into the building, so that first of



School materials

all the roof had to be completely replaced. This was done in 2019 in phase 1, but be-

fore phase 2 was started, the COVID-19 pandemic cast a shadow over the region. The school was closed and the economy

Matula, North Malawi

Between desire and reality

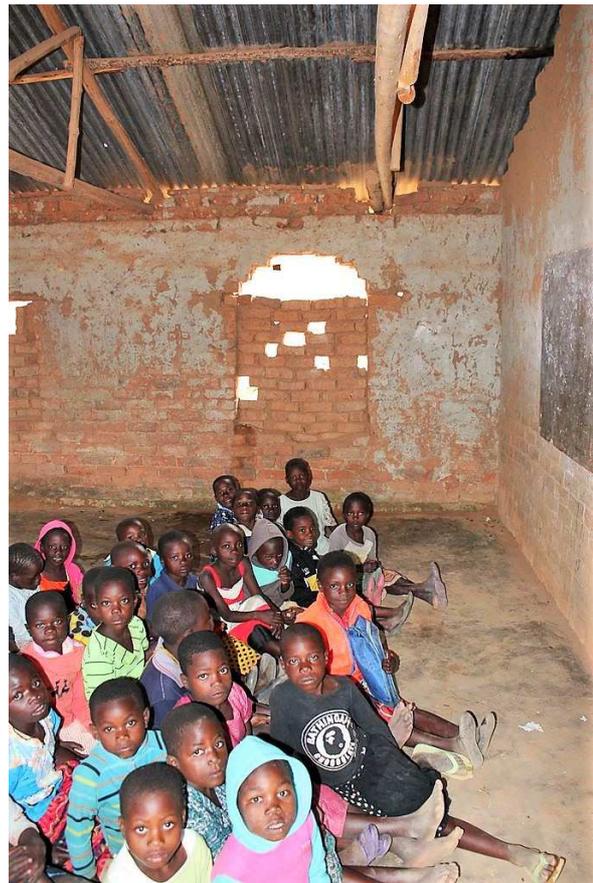
When the needs of a school exceed the means a relief organisation can offer, the only thing that can be done is to start small – Matula is one example, but it is not easy at all.

We were not surprised by the wishlist: three buildings with a total of twelve classrooms, a



The new roof - a good start is made

was hit badly in the whole country which increased poverty. There were even fewer chances to find a job and only modest social help. Prospects were once more gloomy, but the project continued. During the second phase in 2020, all the windows were replaced, electricity, heaters and blackboards were installed and teaching materials were delivered. The local leader of the project, a former student of the school herself, was overjoyed. „For the first time we have reason to hope that progress will be made in our village“, some parents said. During summer 2021, phase 3 focused on proper toilets and a computer room. Soon it will be time to think of how the school could offer more than education for the children and become the centre of progress for the whole region. There are plenty of ideas as well as further needs.



Studying inside a ruin



Visible progress: The PCs are delivered

staffroom and several flats for the personnel. As IPA did not have a budget of this size, we had to decide what was feasible and what would make sense. The school had eight classrooms for 615 students. Five of them had been built by the parents, but the long building with three rooms was in such a deplorable state that it could not be renovated. This was where IPA and the locals agreed and the people in Matula had to accept the fact that their dream of three new buildings was not possible. What followed was a tough discussion during which the local partners were pulled between the des-

pair of the parents and the budget IPA had at its disposal.



The long building before it collapsed

At the beginning IPA was only able to offer a new building with one fully equipped classroom. Even in Zurich we could sense the frustration in the village. It is quite common that beneficiaries do not understand that even in Switzerland money does not grow on trees. They finally accepted our proposition, as the minutes of the school meeting show, but shortly before the project started we were informed that the villagers had taken down the roof of the long building. Were they trying to put us under pressure?

Sticking to one's principles

We at IPA could well understand the situation in Matula and were concerned about the children who were supposed to study in such conditions. It was clear for us that we



Finding motivation to study is difficult in this place

had to stick to our principles. It was no longer simply a question of the budget, but also

of the signals we were going to send to the region. The balancing act between helping with heart and soul and a professional attitude towards work was not easy.

Shortly before the new classroom was ready to be used, the long building collapsed, fortunately not during lessons. At least two classes can now share the new classroom, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Other classes and teachers are trying hard to improve their efforts and performance and hope to enjoy this privilege one day as well. They are all competing and so the small project had a positive influence on the



The new school building from the outside...

whole school. The parents are happy about the new solid building and are hoping that further help will follow. Meanwhile the locals will try to build themselves again. Those who suffer are the boys and girls who will



...and from the inside

have to remain patient, because their parents will not be able to solve the problem with their means.

The Interview (Part 1)

“IPA addresses the needs of the people”

We sent the first email to your organisation at the end of 2013. What effect did this have on you?

The email from IPA was a surprise, also good news. We hoped that a partnership with IPA would add value and strengthen the efforts of DAMRA (Development Action for Marginalized Rural Areas) in supporting rural communities and their development. At that time, we had a long list of requests for support from various rural community development projects, so we thought this might be a chance to connect IPA with such communities.

We had to postpone the start of our partnership for a year. How did the DAMRA team react?

The team received the news with mixed reaction. Some hoped that IPA would contact them again in the future while others were saying that is the end of the story. Personally, I was also in the group that felt that IPA would never come back to DAMRA and I was very disappointed at that time. But a year later, when you came back with the good news that a partnership with DAMRA was possible, the whole team at DAMRA as well as the rural communities we work with were so happy.

What distinguishes IPA from other international organisations in your opinion?

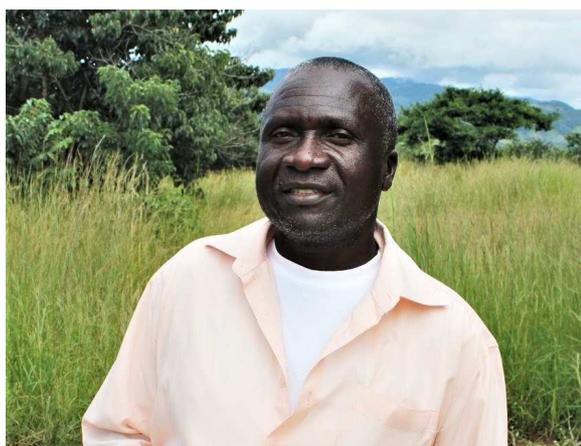
IPA has an uncomplicated communication with the local NGO partner organisation. It is an important difference compared to other organisations which use consultants or even other international organisations to oversee their projects and reports which makes it a long process. Also, project assessments, monitoring and evaluation is done by IPA without any consultants or representatives from other organisations. Project funds are sent to project partners on time and when needed, while other international organisations channel their funds through district councils or government ministries which is a

big problem. IPA addresses needs of the community and not those of political institutions. IPA does this by talking to people directly and make joint implementation plans with the communities concerned.

Where would DAMRA be today if there had not been a partnership with IPA?

Thanks to IPA, DAMRA was being noticed by other NGOs. Many interested parties now recognise DAMRA as one of the organisations achieving a lot of development work in the district. This has led the local districts and other organisations to support some of our projects. Without the many projects implemented by IPA, DAMRA would not be where it is today. The capacities of DAMRA have been greatly expanded, in scope as well as financially.

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



Flument Mkinga, 58, is a father of six children and lives in Rumphu, Malawi. He was trained as a forester and obtained his degree in 1989. He became a founding member and managing director of Development Action for Marginalized Rural Areas (DAMRA) and has implemented successfully many projects with IPA since 2015.

Preview of forthcoming IPA projects

Guirvidig, North Cameroon.

Over 2,500 students are taught here in nine classrooms. Due to the shortage of space, only 55% of the children can actually start school. The girls are the ones who suffer, because the families send only the boys to school if they have to choose. A class at Wohlen high school wants to end this discrimination and supports the school with a new building and other part-projects.



Pheti, North Malawi.

In this village people have to live without drinking water. The women fetch the water from tiny ponds which are shared by animals. They have to walk very far, risk being bitten by snakes and arrive home with polluted water for their children. With the help of undertaking an environmental project in the Swiss mountains, a group of students is seeking raise funds to provide clean drinking water for the village of Pheti.



- Swiss organisation for development co-operation
- Founded in 1994, since 2001 known and active under the name IPA (International Project Aid)
- Engaged in transitioning and developing countries with focus on education
- IPA also offers help for self-help, e.g. through projects in the fields of food production and water supply as well as the issuing of credits
- The aspect of the IPA brand is the integration of youth in the implementation of projects. Swiss students get the opportunity to gain formative experiences
- School classes and junior-teams select, 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 checked once more
- IPA has received the Profax prize in 2005, and in 2007 was named "Swiss Charity of the Year" by Man Investments
- International Project Aid-UK CIO (IPA-UK) registered with the Charities Commission, number 1170012, based in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, is associated with International Project Aid (IPA), Switzerland
- IPA (Switzerland) provides the project evaluation, project management and on-site supervision for IPA-UK, employing local partners to ensure resources are delivered to where they are needed

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