

The Breglumasi Program

Laprake-Tirana, Albania

1995-1997

for:

Volontariate Iternazionale per lo Sviluppo, VIS-Roma Catholic Relief Services, Tirana Branch World Bank, Tirana Branch Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, Rotterdam, Netherlands

**Tirana,
27 January 1998**

Sef Sloomweg, program manager

Introduction

The involvement of Bilance/Mensen in Nood, (at the time Cebemo) with the migrants from different parts of Albania settling down in Tirana started practically speaking in 1993. In that year Jagoda Paukovic visited Albania for a first fact finding mission for Cebemo. After preparatory work by the fathers Salazians of Don Bosco, (Don Oreste Vale) and the support of Pier Paolo Ambrosi of the consultancy Akoneks, the Voluntariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo (VIS), the development organization of the Salazians of Don Bosco, took responsibility for the project "Association Breglumasi" as described in the project document, last version September 1995. Between 1993 and 1998 Albania went through many changes, and so the quarter Breglumasi for which the project proposal was developed. This short report wants to present the results of the project over the period 1995-1997. We have chosen for few words and many pictures. For more detailed written descriptions we refer to the literature mentioned in the back. The Breglumasi team thanks its donors, Bilance and Mensen in Nood, the Netherlands, KICI, the Netherlands, Catholic Relief Services, Tirana Branch, Worldbank, Tirana Branch, VIS-Rome and the Centrum Ontmoeting der Volkeren/PSO the Netherlands for their trust in the program and the financial support to make it possible.

Background

The Breglumasi program supports the residents in the quarter Breglumasi-Laprake of Tirana, Albania's capital. This part of Laprake hosted the last seven years about 10.000 people, who came from the mountains of mostly Northern Albania in search for a better life. The area is situated between the railroad from Tirana and Dures and the Tirana river. This fact gave it its name: "Breglumasi" means "near the river". Actually the area lies around the industrial complex formerly known as the "Josif Pashko Kombinat". This industrial complex was known for its pre-fabrication of the mushroom shaped bunkers, scattered all over the country, a proof for the xenophobia of the countries former communist leaders.

Around 65% of the new residents of Breglumasi-Laprake have their origin in the Northern part of the country, the remaining 35% come from Central and Southern Albania. The residents come from mountainous areas. The resources for making a living are limited in the mountains, as good agricultural land is lacking. Besides for the bad quality of the land, many people had to leave their land of origin due to the construction of gigantic artificial lakes for hydropower plants. The development of the quarter was a steady process. Since 1990 the first "pioneers" buy from Roma people the right to settle. The Roma had occupied the land since tens of years. A legal settlement of the ownership rights never realized. The first pioneers sold a part of their land to newcomers: family, villagers or unknown families. The residents have a low income, a minority (20%) has a steady job, like policeman, attorney or worker. Nearly everybody is construction worker as well, and many residents actually rent themselves out for construction labor. A small part of the families started on the plot a small shop, a bar or workshop. Other sources of income are: money from the sale of possessions in the place of origin, loans from relatives abroad, income from seasonal work in Italy or Greece, and furthermore irregular income from trafficking, drugs trade, theft and blackmail. The people involved in the latter activities live outside the scope of the program, but we have significant signals that certainly under youngsters between 15 and 35 this is considered a normal way of making a living.

Preparation and goals

Since 1992 the residents in Breglumasi got support from Don Oreste Vale, a Salazian priest of Don Bosco, who was responsible for setting up church activities in the area. In 1993 Don Oreste met a representative from Bilance (before Cebemo). At the request of Bilance, the external advisor of the Salazians, Pier Paolo Ambrosi of Akoneks did a research to the needs of the residents and to the possibilities for a support program. In 1994 a program was formulated and the Italian development organization of the Salazians, Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo (VIS) was ready to be the contract partner of Bilance for the project. For the execution of the program Bilance asked the Dutch Centrum Ontmoeting der Volkeren (COV) to bring in the program manager, while VIS would help with a volunteer to set up the social activities in the project.

The target group for the project was made up of about 500 families around the "Josif Pashko Kombinat". Roughly two-third of the families originated from a Catholic area, the others have a Muslim or Orthodox background. About 10% of the population is part of the Roma population. The goals of the project are:

- **the development of a modern urban quarter**
- the development of social activities
- the start of a kindergarten
- stimulating employment
- stimulating democratization and "institution building"
- **development of a social housing program**

From October 1995 onwards, COV, the Netherlands, has send on request of Bilance, Sef Slootweg as a project manager. This was made financial possible with PSO support. His contract is until October 1999. The VIS Coordinator for the social activities was between October 1995 and July 1997 Alessandro Iannini with his wife Agnese. Since July 1997 Rosaria Cortellesa is in charge for the support of the youth group and the women group. From September 1997 Felicia Violi enforced the team of VIS volunteers.

Method and results

At the first place the whole project aims at democratization and **"institution building"**. The other goals are in fact instruments to support the main objective. It is about the support of community based organizations. The most important of these are the residential association "Shoqata Breglumasi", the women committee and the youth group. Furthermore a team was formed of about 5-6 Albanian staff members to carry out the program and to realize its objectives.

The activities can be split into three type:

- **social activities**
- **infrastructure improvement and legalization of the area**
- employment.

1. Social activities

In 1995 two houses are bought for the program to be used as a social center and a kindergarten. During 1996 both buildings are enlarged and improved. The social center hosts church activities since

the beginning. End 1997 the construction of a catholic church started at a plot next to the kindergarten.

Allessandro Iannini, supported by his wife Agnese, has started the women group and the youth group. For special activities also other VIS volunteers of the Tirana Don Bosco Center were involved. During the summer activities VIS volunteers from Italy were a welcome support. During 1996-1997 the Albanian social worker Besa Tarazhi became the counterpart of the Italian coordinator of the social program.

The women group has 30 members who meet weekly. Their most important activity is the production and sale of needlework. The Italian organization VIS takes care for selling the products in the Italian third world shops of the Salazians of Don Bosco. The women use 10% of the proceeds for a fund for other activities like joint trips or loans within the group.

The youth group consist of around 25 young people, a part of them acting as leaders. This group organizes after-school activities for different age groups. The activities are sports and play, music and dance, but also complementary to school courses in Italian and English language. The social center is also the home port of the Association Breglumasi. All their meetings are held in the center. A care-taker is employed for the safety and for the repairs. A secretary is daily present for administrative support of the groups, the association and for the kindergarten. Every month appears the information bulletin "Fjala jone" (Our Word) in which all active groups present themselves.

One room in the social center is furnished as a consulting room for a family doctor. He is a authorized doctor who himself is living in the area. Daily he has consulting hours and visits patients at home. He receives emergency medicines from internationally aid organizations like Caritas Albania. The kindergarten has four tiny rooms. It consists of four groups with almost 80 children between 3 and 7 year. Six days a week the children get a creche and pre-school program by three certified nursery teachers and two assistants. A parents committee is involved in the school. A lot of energy is spend to improve the pre-school teaching capacities of the nursery teachers. New materials for teaching programs and play materials are thoroughly prepared and introduced by Joke Matijssen, the partner of Sef Slootweg, the program manager.

By mediation of KICI-the Netherlands, in September 1997 a truckload arrived with school inventory and materials. This is divided over three schools in and around the Breglumasi quarter, and to a school at 20 km South of Tirana.

2. Infrastructure and legalization

The development of a modern urban quarter and the attention for the social housing program was realized by supporting residents with the legalization of the quarter as a living area, the design of a road structure plan and in actually improving roads. A first point for action was the relation with the local authorities. The quarter was registered as industrial zone and the political and administrative responsables had to be convinced that the destination of the quarter needs to be changed from industrial into living zone. To have this officially recognized, urban designs were made and submitted for approval by the authorities. The second point of action was to involve the residents in the preparation and implementation of amelioration of the quarter. This process is now at full speed. The central and local authorities have chosen the area as a Pilot-site for a infrastructure improvement program, financed by a Worldbank loan. The start of this Worldbank program is foreseen mid-1998. During 1996 and 1997 the staff of the Breglumasi program has together with the residents association widened and improved 2,5 km of existing road in the quarter and an irrigation channel is covered to be used as a road. The roads are excavated and solidified with gravel. In numerous and endless conversations with residents is worked to find a way how every house can get connection to the main roads and how the electricity and watersystem can be improved. We expect to widen another 1,5 km of road to prepare the area for the infrastructure improvement program of the city of Tirana. To prepare this Worldbank financed program the Breglumasi program executed several researches to get a view of the social and economic situation of the residents. Important is to learn what are the real possibilities of the residents to contribute financially to the infrastructure improvements. The strategy with legalization and infrastructure investments is based upon a combination of public and residential money.

3. Employment

At the start of the Breglumasi program much was expected from the credit component. In 1995 a credit program was prepared and finally five credits were provided. This experiment was not successful. Despite a careful way of selecting candidates and in spite of intensive accompanying of the borrowers, three of them did not reimburse anything and the other two stopped after some months with repayments. In 1996 we started cooperation with the Albanian Development Fund to revive the credit facility. After the collapse of the so called "Pyramid-schemes" early 1997, was decided to stop the credit program in the Breglumasi program.

In other ways attention is paid to provide (temporary) employment. The enlargement and improvement of the two buildings for a social center and a kindergarten and the road improvements provided 200 residents with one month of income. Beside this seven residents have a permanent job in the program.

Democratization and institution building

Albania is a country that has to become a democracy while "coming directly from the feudal Middle Ages via a 45 year during communist experiment". This is often heard as an explanation for the difficulties of the country accepting democratic rules and institutions. This transition process cannot be achieved in a few years. The Breglumasi team tries to stimulate the cooperation between the residents of the quarter, to give them self-confidence and a sense for reality towards expectations about the possibilities of the authorities to improve their situation. This process develops with falling down and standing up again. Positive results are the enforcement of the residents organization. As a result of the election process early 1997 for the board of the Association the membership rate increased. Many people are active, in street-committees, in the women-group or in the activities of the youth. Not only in the quarter of Breglumasi the program developed institution building and the civil society. The team supported the preparation of the Worldbank inner city infrastructure improvement program. An important milestone was December 1997 when a eight-days during workshop for civil servants of the City and of the Tirana District, of the Ministry for Public Works and Transport and for the National Planning Institute was organized including field-trips to irregular settlements in and around Tirana. The workshop concluded with a seminar for a wider audience, with the participation of the minister, the vice-mayor of Tirana and the chairwoman of the District of Tirana. The aim of the workshop and the seminar was to improve the knowledge and capacities of the central and local administration to participate in urban infrastructure improvement programs. Interest of the press and of radio and television gave the opportunity to explain the aims to a wide audience. The organization was in close cooperation with the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies from Rotterdam. At the same time it was the first public presentation of the Breglumasi team as a new independent NGO: "Co-Plan, Center for Habitat Development".

The team

The Breglumasi program started in October 1995 with Alessandro Iamiini of the Italian Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo (VIS), supported by his wife Agnese as coordinator social activities; and by Sef Slootweg as program manager, send by the Dutch Centrum Ontmoeting der Volkeren (COV) by mediation of PSO. Their first collaborators gave mainly support with translating. In the course of 1996 and 1997 the Albanian team obtained it's current composition: five permanent members and from the end of 1997 two assistants. The core members are: Besnik Aliaj, architect and team-leader, director of Co-Plan, Center for Habitat Development

Besa Tarazhi, social worker

Dritan Shutina. engineer

Luan Deda, architect

Amalia Tola, financial administration

Besides the staff of the program in the quarter seven persons are getting paid from the financial recourses of the Breglumasi program: three nursery teachers and two assistants, one secretary and one warden.

Evaluation and future

In august 1997 the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies from Rotterdam carried out an evaluation of the program. As one of the conclusions of this evaluation was decided to "Albanise" the program. This meant an independent Non-Governmental-Organization (NGO) was created by the core members of the Breglumasi team with the name "Co-Plan, Center for Habitat Development". This Albanian NGO will continue the Breglumasi program and bring it in the second phase, the real improvement of the infrastructure and the legalization of the quarter in close cooperation of the local authorities. Besides this the social program will be continued in cooperation with VIS. Co-Plan will extend its social activities also to other quarters who are in similar conditions as Breglumasi. Alessandro Iannini of VIS has been succeeded by Rosaria Cortellessa and Felicia Violi, both volunteers of VIS. VIS has indicated to continue its support for the program with volunteers. The program manager as provided by the Dutch COV remains active until October 1999 and has in the director of the new NGO Co-Plan an excellent counterpart for handing over his tasks and responsibilities. Bilance has indicated its willingness to provide financial support for the second phase of the Breglumasi program.

Literature

For a more detailed acquaintance with the Breglumasi program we refer to the following reports:

1. Project proposal c432/002a, Association "Breglumasi", Lapraka (Tirana, Albania), Feb.-Sept. 1995
2. Report on the Breglumasi Program 1995-1996, June 1996
3. Financial report Breglumasi program 1995-1996, June 1996
4. Year report Breglumasi Program 1996-1997, July 1997
5. Financial report 196-1997 September 1997
6. IHS Evaluation report of the Breglumasi Program, Tirana, Albania, October 1997

Finances 1995-1997 Expenses

	us\$
Social Center and Kindergarten	
Purchase and improvements, furnishings	92882
Permanent staff Social Center and Kindergarten	15294
Maintenance, supplies and materials	1709
<u>Total</u>	

Legalization living area, urban designs, improvement roads

External costs for layout and implementation credit fund including credits

Internal program costs		
Staff costs	14046	
Investments vehicles	44339	
Use and maintenance vehicles	7949	
Investments office equip.	12342	
Office & maintenance	6983	
Courses & Training	8904	
<u>Total</u>		94563
Local costs expatriates	14437	
Monitoring costs	11650	
Evaluation costs	12000	
<u>total other costs</u>		38087
<u>Total expenses</u>		<u>US\$ 320885</u>

The expenses for the Breglumasi program are subdivided by the different activities, the general costs of the project and the external costs. The social center and the kindergarten made up 34% of the expenses in the period 1995-1997. The most part of this were the costs for the purchase and improvement of the buildings. The preparation of the legalization of the quarter Breglumasi, including technical support for the urban designs and the widening and the improvement of roads made up 19% of the expenses. The credit fund used 5% of the expenses. The internal project costs, including salaries, office, transport and courses used 30% of the expenses. The external accompanying and support made up 12%.

In this overview the costs made by VIS - Italy for sending volunteers are not incorporated. The same applies for the financial contribution of COV through the PSO-program for deploying the program manager.

Recourses

Bilance as main donor of the program has made available NFL 671.433. As the original budget for some budget headings was to tight, KICI was asked for a supplementary contribution of NFL. 89.537,

mainly to buy a new car for the program. This sum was came available in March 1997. Due to the big tumult in Albania at the time, we waited with the purchase of a new Landrover Defender Tdi Hardtop until November 1997.

In 1996 the Catholic Relief Services, Tirana branch, donated US\$ 18.691 for sharing the extra rebuilding costs of the Social Center and the Kindergarten. From other recourses US\$ 6460 was received.

At 1 January 1998 is still to be received NFL 22.241. VIS-Rome as contract partner of Bilance for the Breglumasi program keeps almost US\$ 71.500 at the bank and in Tirana is almost US\$ 18.000 available. Co-plan will receive a contribution of US\$ 19.000 from the Worldbank for participation in the preparation of the infrastructure improvement project in Breglumasi and Bathore. For the continuation of the Breglumasi program is 1998 is as yet available US\$ 109.256 and NFL 22.241.

For the periods 1995-June 1996 and for July 1996-June 1997 VIS has delivered a financial report. The financial report on July 1997-December 1997 is in preparation. Co-Plan prepares a project proposal for phase II of the program.

Recourses

	donations	received	remaining
Bilance	NFL. 671.443,	NFL 649.202,	NFL 22.241,
KICI	NFL. 89.537,	NFL 89.537,	NFL -
VIS	US\$ 42.000,	US\$ 42.000,	US\$ -
COV	US\$ 42.000,	US\$ 42.000,	US\$ -
CRS	US\$ 18.691,	US\$ 18.691,	US\$ -
Burgo DB Rome	US\$ 1355,	US\$ 1355,	US\$ -
Mensen in Nood	US\$ 4505,	US\$ 4505,	US\$ -
others	US\$ 600,	US\$ 600,	US\$ -
Remaining for 1998			
VIS Rome			US\$ 71.413
VIS Tirana			US\$ 14.598
Breglumasi cashbox			US\$ 3.309
Worldbank (Co-Plan)	US\$ 19000	US\$	US\$ 19.000
Advance of Breglumasi to Mensen in Nood for		Emerg. prg.	US\$ 936
lAvailable in 1998 total		US\$ 109.256	NFL 22.2411