

# **ALBANIA ART GOLD 2 (AGA 2) PROGRAMME**

## **LUMI VLORE PROJECT**

### **Proposal of Action Plan**

#### **Premises**

The Lumi Vlore project is one of the most relevant work of AGA2 Programme. It covers the area of the river valley Shushices southeast of Vlorë. The valley extends about 60 km from Drashovice in Kuc and beyond, via the source of the river Shushices and even further up the road to Tepelena and Gjirokastra, through seven municipalities and 60 villages.

This is an integrated development intervention that seeks to reduce poverty and emigration through an area inhabited by over 40,000 people. The current economy of the valley is based almost exclusively on agricultural production and livestock; flagship products are the sheep and goat meat, milk and cheese, fruit and vegetables and herbs in the entire area is traditionally rich. No lack of natural resources such as timber logging and gravel of the river are plundered for the benefit of economies of the strongest regions of the Country, but the most interesting attractions of the valley is definitely the typical rural landscape marked by the flow of the river Shushices, slow and clean, nature has a rare beauty, especially in mountain reliefs and in the richness and variety of vegetation that goes from crop production in the plains to hilly areas of the Mediterranean up to scenario tree-lined slopes of wildness mountain in the foothills that are facing Greece.

The difficulty of access to the valley, due to lack of functional connections and the lack of roads to the near sea coast offers no alternative to an autarkic economy that cannot benefit from the proximity of mass tourism from Himara coast from Saranda. Except some outstanding productions such as cheese and herbs, products of the valley are distributed only in the inner areas of the Valley and rarely reach the market of Vlorë where preferred products are Greek or from other regions of Albania.

Nevertheless, the valley has natural resources, rural, productive, cultural and historical monuments of utmost importance and hence the need for action to promote local resources and reduce the and economic gap which causes land abandonment and depopulation of inland areas.

In addition to fruit, wine and agricultural production in general, it should be highlighted the presence of important archaeological sites (Olympia, Amantia) and the ruin of ancient Illyrian villages and further caves, dolmens from Prehistoric age. Unique, the polyphonic singing of the valley is considered one of the most important cultural phenomena of the entire Albania and has been recognized by UNESCO as a cultural asset of humanity. Dozens of groups singing cultivate this ancient art and even young people are not reluctant to practice it.

Finally, the mountainous area has some traits of rare intensity and beauty, coupled with the charm of the river, its springs and suspension bridges over which pass through the cattle, suggesting that this valley may be elected to protected environmental area in which to house tourists, nature lovers. The history of places is great and experienced hikers can retrace daring crossing of mountains in Greece or leading up to the Ionian Sea. Along these dirt roads armed conflicts and massacres of armies and partisans during the Second World War took place, especially after the armistice that separated the fate of Italy from the Nazis and German allies.

There are many reasons why local development and international action to succeed, but essential will be the role of local institutions, which must show ability to make cohesive over time in the defense of the project objectives, joined with the efficiency of local development agency AULEDA which will provide for methods and availability of additional resources as far as the operational arm of the Lumi Vlore project in animation and awareness in the community.

### **PROJECT LUMI Vlorë, PAST AND FUTURE OF A POSSIBLE STRATEGY FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**

As part of the ART GOLD Programme Human Development 2 Albania, financed by Italy and managed by UNDP and UNOPS, two agencies of the United Nations system, the project LUMI Vlorë stands as an integrated local development initiative that meets interventions to environmental, rural, tourism, social and cultural sectors hopefully joined by material and immaterial infra-structure investments which could also be supported by external interventions in the UN-Italy programme.

The project area is Shushices River Valley, southeast of Vlorë, bounded on the north by the municipality of Armen and south by the villages of Vranisht and Kuc, where the sources of Shushices were born. The involved population is over 40,000 people and intervention area covers

about 300 sq km, held on 7 Common (Brataj, Kote, Sevaster, Shushica, Vllahine, Hore Vranisht. Armen) and over 60 villages belonging to these municipalities.

The work of defining a development strategy of the area began in 2004 within the first human development program called ART GOLD Albania 1, which collected the results of PASARP Multilateral Programme launched by Italy since 1999.

This first action done by that Programme was the recognition of the territorial identity of the valley of Shushices, provisionally called "Ecological Valley" for the type of crops absolutely free from chemical fertilizers that distinguishes fruit and vegetable production area, and its geomorphic and anthropological homogeneity. Already in 2006-2009, FAO conducted some training and support initiatives for fruits and vegetables producer that showed how advantageous can be the certification of local products in these regions. In addition, during last years the program UN-Italy took advantage from the contribution of decentralized cooperation offered by some Italian regions and provinces, municipalities and institutions (universities etc). Among these the intervention of the Marche region who supported several interventions to restructure private apartments for widespread hospitality and finally, in 2008, to entrust a consultant's drafting guidelines for a master plan for sustainable economic development along the Valley of Shushices based on tourism and manufacturing. A significant knowledge contribution was also provided by research performed by AULEDA the development agency of Vlora, which produced a report on the very broad nature of the rural society of the Valley and on the determinants of its economy.

Thanks to these studies it was possible to reach a clearer framework for planning of assumptions interventions, launched in November 2006 with the creation of a Committee for the Promotion of Regional Park LUMI Vlora who met the municipalities of Valle, Region of Vlora, the UN agency AULEDA; this Committee gave itself as a mission the nomination of the Regional Natural Park as indicated by the 8606 law on protected areas of the Albanian Republic. Another law approved in June 2010, established the rules for that application and set the formalities that comply.

At the conclusion of meetings with potential local partners (institutions, producers, operators in the rural sector, cultural and tourism) conducted on behalf of ART GOLD Albania 1 and 2 staff by technical experts, it was possible to focus on a development strategy centered on four areas: environmental, tourism, rural and social / anthropological / cultural.

Before moving on to the summary of the recommendations so far gathered from studies conducted in the Valley by Italian and Albanian consultants, it will be useful to take account of several conditioning factors:

a) the precarious road links and public transport prevent a quick access to the Valley, penalizing social / cultural exchanges and trade of fresh agricultural products, which are a fundamental asset of the local economy and a relevant added value

b) the deep distrust of people toward institutions and the possibility of finding a job and for young people empowers the migration choice for young people often just turned the age of 18

c) the mistrust to form cooperatives and organized groups of production and storage of goods and products to enhance the quality and reliability of local supplies, probably the consequence of an era not yet totally forgotten

d) the almost total lack of information links (telephone, television, data networks, distribution newspapers etc) that affects social relations and the inalienable right to information prevents links to the rest of regional, national and international society

e) the shortage of meeting, cultural entertainment and recreation and socialization places (bars, clubs, restaurants, pubs etc.) that make more bearable isolation from the rest of the Albanian community, coupled with lack of transport links, increases the sense of loneliness and frustration, particularly among the younger generations and makes it difficult to arrange accommodation and address for any visitor.

Life in the Valley for young people but also for older people is set up as an enclave experience; limited trade with the community of their own

village or town, remains, slightly improved, as far as the capacity of communication of these communities during the communist regime. Similarly, the visitor interested in knowing the particularities of place have no references or agencies that can accommodate information, neither in Vlora or along the valley, no guides or documents to approach this so rich and historically important reality which homes a unique biodiversity and a community that has preserved, miraculously unharmed, their customs and skills of expression and artistic creation. Accordingly with mentioned points, each sector and area of intervention identified in the development plan will include an explicit reference to the implementation of physical infrastructure (roads, bridges, dirt, etc.) and services (meeting points and host offices, centers tourist orientation and information, computer networks and satellite telephone, etc.) which can multiply the efficiency and effectiveness of all initiatives in support of the Valley economy for improving living conditions of its inhabitants. Without these improvements a real change of the current parameters of livability is unlikely in the short term.

## **The strategy and actions proposed**

### **AXIS 1: ENVIRONMENT**

The proposal to create a Regional Park is the cornerstone of the whole development strategy. In fact it is a method that promotes cohesion between local institutions, and participation of local actors in strategic choices and the definition of rules for the management of local flora and fauna heritage, landscape and subsoil resources (forests, water, gravel) and the drafting of an action plan to guide investment and development policies. The presence of AULEDA agency, in Vlora, which promotes development policies of the region in order to valorize its resources, it is therefore ideal as a lever to define the strategy of the Regional Park and implement the development plan.

#### **Objectives**

Protecting the environment, landscape and biodiversity in the valley of Shushices through the establishment of a Regional Park and a Park Board as an autonomous and sustainable institution and expression of the will of identity from Communities of the Valley. The park will be a defense of the memory and identity of places for qualification of tourism and agricultural production in the area.

#### **Actions**

1.1 Re-launch of the Organizing Committee of the Lumi Vlore Park established in 2006, including all the Mayors, the Region of Vlora, the

Prefecture, the ART GOLD program Albania, the agency AULEDA and all relevant bodies, from public and private sectors (universities, businesses, associations, etc.) of the region

1.2 Set the main objectives and sign a Memorandum of Understanding for the candidacy of Shushices Valley as a new Regional Park

1.3 Define the perimeters of the areas and levels of protection consistent with the Albanian legislation regarding the environment to maintain biodiversity and protect the landscape of the park

1.4 Promote the recognition, within the Ministry, of the regional park of Lumi Vlore.

1.5 Establish the Management Board of the Park

1.6 Approve Regulations for the protection of natural heritage and landscape, aiming primarily to the rational and sustainable management of forests and water

1.7 Develop an action plan to promote environmental protection, sustainability and the economy of the Park

1.8 Implement the Action Plan with the help of Government and International Cooperation

1.9 Training and qualification of the staff of the Park and maintenance of facilities

### **Times**

For steps 1 to 5, a period of six months from January 2011

For steps 6 to 9 it will require further 12 months

### **Expected products**

The recognition of Lumi Vlore as a new Regional Park

Rules of the park

The Action Plan of the Park

The Management Board of Regional Park

### **Financial Resources**

For steps 1 to 5, it will be enough the support from Art Gold Albania 2 and AULEDA

For the next steps each of the Valley Communes will provide a contribution to the Park to support the operating costs involving also Albanian partners, public and private, and international ones in sustainability. A crucial contribution to sustainability will be given by Tourism which will be hosted and attracted by the services offered by the Park and a fee should be added on every product / service labeled with the brand of the Park.

### **Facilities and physical infrastructure to be planned**

LUMI Vlore Regional Park headquarters

Observation points for bird watching, storage materials, mountain huts and refreshment visitors

## **AXIS 2: TOURISM**

Inside the protected area included in the Natural Park, tourism initiatives can start based on attraction of natural beauty and customs of the local community, among them the polyphonic singing and the typical food and value of historical events. Hospitality and widespread organized tour routes will allow travelers to know the natural environment of the valley with its unique biodiversity and the historical memory of places. The natural and cultural tourism will also act as a growth engine for the typical products of the valley, offering opportunities for certification and diffusion of products which will empower and integrate the offer to the mass tourism along the Vlore coast. The strategic approach of UNDP AGA2 Programme to the tourism resources in Vlore Region , will complete the insights of this plan.

### **Objectives**

Having a drag action based on attraction of the untouched tourist sites, classification of local productions, home hospitality, ancient tradition of polyphonic singing and hiking in the mountains. Thematic paths should be naturalistic, historical, biodiversity, archaeological, anthropological and cultural performing music, food and wine.

NB recognition of the Regional Park of the Lumi Vlore is a better opportunity for development but it's not exclusive in order to implement the objectives and actions of the axis 2. In other words, the presence of the Park can multiply the effectiveness of the above initiatives, but is not a prerequisite.

### **Actions**

- 2.1 Mapping of the tourism resources and points of interest (scenic, monumental, nature, hospitality etc)
- 2.2 Tracking of thematic routes (music, herbs, wine, cheese, history, etc.) and footpaths and hills
- 2.3 Identification of possible point for tourist orientation and info
- 2.4 Publishing of a guide for naturalistic, hiking, historic of the valley



2.5 Creation of a tourism brand for the identification of typical products of the valley (or area of the park) (herbs, fruits and vegetables, honey, jams, crafts, etc.)

2.6 Increase direct and indirect home hospitality and catering

2.7 Promoting international forms of tourism in the valley, through agreements with tour operators and associations of natural and cultural excursions

### **Times**

For steps 1 through 5 it will be enough 8 months

Points 6 and 7 require a period between 12 and 24 months

### **Expected products**

Map of potential tourism resources of the Valley

Guide about nature, hiking and historical targets with appendix about hospitality and food and wine

Brand of the Valley (or Park)

### **Financial Resources**

For actions 1 to 5 it will be enough resources made available by ART GOLD Albania 2

For actions 6 and 7 it will need to start an additional phase of fund raising among the partners of the decentralized cooperation (Italian and European regions, provinces and municipalities) or financial assistance through the Trust Fund provided by AULEDA.

### **Facilities and physical infrastructure to be planned**

Two tourist orientation points in the valley, one at the northern (Drashovice) and another at south (Kuc)

### **AXIS 3: Rural**

The main areas of the Valley economy are agriculture and livestock, which can be enhanced by positive results of the other axes. The rural activities will be developed in the sense of increased quality and quantity of the finest products, but especially by acting on the improvement of controls on the health of animals, on storage and packaging of all food (security certification) and on the potential for selling products and general image of the valley (brand, territorial marketing). The experience of potential partners in Europe (GAL consortia product) may be essential for the success of initiatives. The analysis of sustainable and competitive Vlore region's resources including the valley of Shushices is on charge of ILS LEDA service on behalf of UNDP AGA2 Programme and it will deliver further detailed elements suitable for rural development of the Valley..

#### **Objectives**

To implement an integrated promotion and development not limited to improve the quality and quantity of excellent products (meat, milk, fruits, vegetables, herbs) through standard control and the introduction of support structures (warehouses, cold and drying), but increasing the visibility of the Valley as a whole and its identity linked to the promotion of production sites. To organized consortia as categories of producers belonging to the same industry in order to make products competitive and to give them access to local markets (summer tourism coastal urban markets) and foreign neighbors (Greece, Montenegro. Kosovo) and European (in the case of herbs).

#### **Actions**

- 3.1 Mapping of rural resources, both natural and manufactured, and their potential
- 3.2 Recovery and development of actions already undertaken in previous years (studies, research, projects etc.)
- 3.3 Strengthening of supply chains with the acquisition of equipment and technology (pilot installation)
- 3.4 Training and dissemination of European standards certification

3.5 Establishment of associations for promotion of typical products and resources and category associations to facilitate knowledge transfer and cooperation efforts

3.6 Promotion of regional marketing and planning

3.7 Funding of projects to improve quality and marketing

3.8 Certification of products and specific brands with the support of European partners (GAL, chambers of commerce, food research institutes, associations of farmers and producers, rural districts, etc.)

### **Times**

For steps 1 through 3 are already being targeted and it will be enough next 6 months

Sections 4 and 5 require more time and investment (about 12 to 18 months)

Points 6, 7 and 8 require long lead times associated with the activity of AULEDA, its ability to internationalization and the work of industry associations

### **Expected products**

Map Resources Rural Valley

Rural Development Action Plan

Product brands and quality protocols

### **Financial Resources**

For actions 1 to 4 will be enough resources made available by ART GOLD Albania 2

For shares from 5 to 8, it will need AULEDA to properly animate Valley producers and then make available the Guarantee Fund resources, carefully selecting the quality of projects submitted, developing, in the meanwhile, a policy of international promotion of the Valley.

### **Facilities and physical infrastructure to be planned**

Warehouses for producer cooperatives and processors with appropriately thermostated stores and in accordance with European rules, to be assigned to temporary storage and packaging of goods

## **AXIS 4: CULTURE AND SOCIAL ISSUES**

The valley of Shushices river community is large and relatively low aged, but it suffers for a chronic emigration which brings away the heads of families and young age guys just 18 The reduction of migration is the first goal and the first parameter which occur in the medium term, the effectiveness of development. The lower and upper schools are present but the general situation of the valley does not guarantee employing of the available workforce and the phenomenon of remittances still allows many families to overcome the poverty integrating low rural income, usually due to women remained in the villages. Women's work is a major economic resources for families of the Valley and the escape of young people (and the speed of the phenomena) is the biggest threat to the future of these areas. It 's essential to act urgently and incisively to tackle causes of migration, reducing isolation and lack of communication between groups of young people in the villages. Important levers could be : the improvement of rural jobs, the spread of nature tourism, the introduction of new activities related to environmental protection, promotion of polyphonic singing traditions and the introduction of innovations in communications and information. This last tool may give both individually (students, citizens, relatives of migrants) and collective (institutions, companies, associations) opportunity to the community of the Valley..

### **Objectives**

Survey and document the most important indigenous cultural phenomena, first of all the polyphonic singing, which was declared as an UNESCO heritage item, but also the craft knowledge related to rural family and women (wool, old crafts)

Support the role of women, true pillar of the rural economy, and promote cultural and social associations between young people and enhance the role of the elderly

Offer opportunities for communication, study, information and cultural empowerment through the use of digital technology (satellite networks, telephone connections, internet etc)

### **Actions**

- 4.1 Mapping of cultural resources and traditional knowledge of rural life
- 4.2 Produce research and studies about migration in the valley, the size and characteristics of the phenomenon and the value of remittances
- 4.3 Identify the information needs of the communities of Valley and set at minimum 10 access points easily reachable
- 4.4 Produce a detailed design and enforcement of digital terrestrial transmission line that will cover the entire Valley to ensure access to the Internet
- 4.5 Installing the terrestrial digital communication network, with flexible and modular configuration, useful for schools, municipalities and businesses in the valley in order to allow young people to be in touch with the rest of the Country and of the World for entertainment and families to be in touch with their relatives abroad
- 4.6 Training for young people and families about use and exploitation of information resources portal to reduce the isolation
- 4.7 Propose and install network services that enable cultural exchanges (internet, skype), distance education, services to institutions and systems for promotion of local resources (songs, tourism, local products and events)
- 4.8 Enhancing the crafts of women's work

### **Times**

For steps 1 through 5 it will be enough 8 months

Items 6, 7, 8 are on medium-term (12-24 months) and subject to the existence of the digital information network

### **Expected products**

A study of cultural resources of the Valley

A research on the characteristics of migration (causes, geographical scope, consequences, new balance social and economic community in the Valley, amount of remittances and their use)

A project to link terrestrial digital high-speed data transmission line (wi-fi or similar) covering the entire Valley with 10 access points, properly equipped and accessible by the public for free

Services (packages) for using the network for educational, administrative, cultural exchange

## **Financial Resources**

Research on the cultural and migration research can be cured by AULEDA and the University of Vlora with the support of the Art Gold Albania Programme 2

The digital terrestrial network will be designed, installed and maintained by an Albanian company that operates in the valley (Albtelecom, Eagle, Vodafone) from Albania ART GOLD 2. The company will provide human work and time investment . Maintenance will be insured for at least 5 years.

Italian and European partners can be delegated to support long-term initiatives such as training in the use of the network and install software to deliver services to the community.

## **Facilities and physical infrastructure to be planned**

A public multi-purpose arena (movie/ theater) is located centrally relative to the size of the valley, to accommodate musical performances, concerts, screenings and meetings.

This meeting point will make available some room to local schools for singing and music training and for the use of electronic network (internet point)



### SHORT-TERM ACTIVITIES

AXIS	Axis/activity Code	Activity description	Nov 2010	Dec 2010	Jan 2011	Feb 2011	Mar 2011	Apr 2011	May 2011	Jun 2011
<b>E N V I R O N M.</b>	1.1	Re-launch Lumi Vlore Committee								
	1.2	Main goals definition and Letter of Understanding								
	1.3	Defining areas and level of defense								
	1.4	Promotion of the Regional Park								
<b>T O U R I S M</b>	2.1	Map of Tourist resources								
	2.2	Tracking paths								
	2.3	Choice of tourist map points								
	2.4	Guide for hiking, nature, history and ..								
<b>R U R A L</b>	3.1	Rural resource map								
	3.2	Recovery of former studies and researches								
	3.3	Pilot project								
	3.4	Training for EU standards								
<b>C U L T U R E</b>	4.1	Cultural and knowledge map								
	4.2	Migration analysis								
	4.3	Choice of Internet access points								
	4.4	Layout of digital network								
	4.5	Digital net implem.								