

LATVIA

Fostering local development

Location

Kaldabruņās

Programming period

2014 - 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 49 792,01

EAFRD 23 701,00

National/Regional 11 153,41

Private 7 437,60

Other 7 500,00

Project duration

2016 – 2017

Project promoter

Association 'Ūdenszīmes'

Contact

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Website

www.udenzimes.lv/cms/

An association working in a remote village in rural Latvia, used RDP support to set up a wood and glass workshop thus creating new employment and income opportunities for the local people.

Summary

The association "Ūdenszīmes" is located at the remote village Kaldabruņa of around 200 inhabitants where very few employment opportunities are available. The association is focusing on culture and arts, and they realized that there is a sufficient number of people in the community who are endowed with both artistic and technical skills on various crafts.



The association used RDP support to redevelop a former wood processing workshop into a modern wood and glass processing space. Apart from renovation works (lighting, heating, ventilation, etc.) modern working tools were purchased and installed including a laser engraving machine.

Results

This project helped establish social entrepreneurship activity in the village. Personalized souvenirs/gifts can be produced and marketed.

9 local people use this workshop to generate additional income, and develop their skills. Six of them are young people under the age of 30, thus the project will allow them to stay in the village.

When workshop is fully operational, it is expected to increase income by 30% in the first year.

The project helped the association to diversify its activities by offering new training opportunities with the use of new working tools, as well as gain a steady source of income to finance other activities.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ When realizing similar projects elsewhere it is important to start analysing the people and the place. What skills are present? Which are directions where local NGOs operate? Will the developed business model fit in the overall image of the NGO and the community?
- ❑ It is important to reassure the people involved. The implementation of the project from the first idea till the completion is a long process; plans of involved people may change, or frustration until the whole project is completed.
- ❑ Proper management of the work is crucial in order to avoid confusion, conflicts about the use of tools, also equivalent redistribution of planned income / expense.
- ❑ What could be done better? Training and development of the website should have been included in the project proposal as well mentoring for at least 12 months.

Context

The association "Ūdenszīmes" (Watermarks) is located at the remote village Kaldabruņa of around 200 inhabitants. The main economic activity in the village is agriculture and the locally available jobs are mainly seasonal, unskilled and low paid. In addition, the number of existing jobs is very limited and without opportunities to grow.

The main activity of the association is culture and arts, and already for several years they have organized different workshops in different fields. Through this process they realized that there is a sufficient number of people in the community who are endowed with both artistic and technical skills on various crafts. In order to enable this social capital to grow, the association decided that it is essential to develop social business activities in the village.

Objectives

"The Tree of the Light Workshop" is a social business project, whose main aim was to create jobs and growth opportunities for the local community, including young, average aged and pre-retirement age people.

The specific objective of the project was to use the experience created within the association, to set up a specialized glass and wood processing studio designing and manufacturing interior decoration items.

Activities

The association used RDP support to restore a former wood processing workshop in the old school of the village. The room was re-developed as a modern wood and glass processing workshop. This involved installing lighting, heating and ventilation systems. In addition, modern working tools were purchased and installed. The most expensive and significant tool was the laser engraving machine.

The team that used the workshop was already involved in the project planning phase - they jointly defined the necessary tools, developed technical specifications. In this way, people who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the project were involved with full responsibility.

The core team is rather diverse and consists of 9 people:

- youth (25-30 years old): two men and four women
Three people from this group had relevant education on designing wood items for interior decoration;
- middle age: one woman without relevant education;

- pre-retirement age: one woman and one man. The latter has a lot of work experience in design.

The group are all locals, and only one of them has permanent job. The others work occasionally as self-employed.

The core team is working on the designing and developing different design elements where glass is combined with wood and other materials. Those are different souvenirs, necklaces and other design accessories.

"Non-governmental organizations have to think about sustainability of their actions as well as about development of human resources in rural areas. It includes also economic aspects. Perhaps it takes time to get over the idea that NGOs work only on voluntary basis and may not require payment for their services. Such approach does not guarantee sustainability in a long run.

Without a doubt, this project is a new kind activity and associated with risks like balancing the economic viability of the project with the abilities and needs of people involved. How to balance the mission of the association with the business conditions? As yet, we ourselves have a lot of questions, because the project develops on its full only now."

Project stakeholder



"... One day there might be no grants. We have to think how we can sustain ourselves. We have come here together, and everyone has some skills, knowledge and will to do. We just need to figure out what we really can do!"

Member of the association

Main results

- This project helped establish social entrepreneurship activity in the village. Personalized souvenirs/gifts can be produced and marketed.
- The project involved 9 local people who use this workshop to generate additional income, as well as for skills development.
- Six of these persons are young people under the age of 30. This project is one of the elements that will allow them to stay in the village, to build a family and raise children, thereby maintaining the village population for at least the next few years.
- When workshop will be fully operational, it is expected to increase income by 30% in the first year.
- This project helped the association to diversify its activities by offering new training opportunities with the use of new working tools.
- The association will achieve its own economic stability, because sources of the income like donations or applying for funding are unpredictable. In this case - the business activity will stimulate employment in the village and stabilize the income of the association.
- Also a successful association will be able to attract more visitors and generate revenues for the farms, businesses and service providers in the area.

Key lessons

This project serves as an example of social entrepreneurship in rural areas. This is the best way how NGO investigated local skills and resources are built in an economical activity that improves the living conditions of local people.

When realizing similar projects elsewhere: start analysing the people and the place. What skills are present? Which are directions where local NGOs operate? Will the developed business model fit in the overall image of the NGO and the community?

Unexpected risks - the involvement of people. The implementation of the project from the first idea to the completion is a long process; plans of involved people may change; sometimes there is a lack of understanding on why it takes so long to implement the whole project. And - proper management of the work is crucial in order to avoid confusion, conflicts about the use of tools, also equivalent redistribution of planned income / expense.

What could be done better? Training and development of the website should have been included in the project proposal as well mentoring for at least 12 months.



Additional sources of information

www.facebook.com/Udenszimes/