

Dorcas *Albania*

Improving the impact
and effectiveness of
poverty alleviation



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We are Dorcas

Dorcas is a faith-based organisation that provides humanitarian assistance and facilitates development cooperation. We invest in sustainable change in the lives of people who are marginalised. In the event of poverty, exclusion or a crisis, we create opportunities for them to flourish.

What we believe
We believe in the value and God-given potential of every single person. We are called to demonstrate God’s love for those in need. This is how we follow Jesus Christ.

What we see
We see a world where poverty, exclusion and crisis marginalise people. We also see the potential of these people and their communities to flourish despite their difficult circumstances.

How we work
Accountable: We do what we say, work transparently and use resources wisely.
Compassionate: We see those in need and stand next to them.
Determined: We have an entrepreneurial spirit and do not give up.
Locally led: We work through local leadership, staff and partners.

What we do
We empower people who are marginalised to develop their talents. And we enable disadvantaged communities to flourish. We equip individuals and communities to promote and ensure participation of all.
We create hope and long-term perspectives in volatile and complex situations. We meet people’s basic needs in times of crisis and increase their ability to overcome poverty and exclusion. We persist despite frequent setbacks and invest in durable relationships to realise sustainable change.
We are part of a global movement of individuals and organisations working for a just and fair world. We recognise and appreciate everybody who supports our work. And we actively partner with others to create synergy and amplify our impact.

Theory of Change

Dorcas views poverty as a condition in which people cannot realise their intellectual, material, physical, social and spiritual needs and capacities. This kind of poverty is often related to exclusion mechanisms and barriers within society. We want to contribute to the protection, inclusion and resilience of people living in poverty, experiencing exclusion or caught in a crisis. Our Theory of Change recognises that transformation is needed at the individual, community and societal levels. We seek to realise a six-fold impact that results in flourishing people and communities.

Dorcas works towards change on three levels:

1. Individual

We create opportunities for people and, if necessary, we also provide for their basic needs.

2. Community

We invest in resilient, self-organising communities; we strengthen the position of certain groups, such as older people, people with disabilities and minority groups, and we encourage community members to support each other and stand up for themselves.

3. Society

We cooperate with local authorities and partners and motivate them to take their responsibilities. We tackle taboos by ensuring that everyone has a voice and that everyone is included.

The Dorcas Theory of Change is translated into programme concepts that create impact,

demonstrate our added value and inform the programmatic priorities set by each Country Office.

The three programme concepts are:

Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery

Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery focuses on saving people’s lives and preserving their dignity during disasters or crises. People’s immediate needs are met, communities are enabled to become resilient to shocks and governments are actively involved in contributing to safer and more peaceful communities.

Social Empowerment and Protection

Social Empowerment and Protection seeks to ensure that the poorest and most marginalised have access to basic services, like health and education, and are empowered in their social development. This is realised by organising and mobilising communities to solve their own problems and work on opportunities through asset-based community development processes.

Inclusive Entrepreneurship

Inclusive Entrepreneurship enables disadvantaged people and groups to acquire the attitudes, competences and skills they need to earn an income and build their dreams. This is realised by creating social and economic value through entrepreneurial livelihoods and applying it to self-employment, small businesses, member-based entities or social enterprises.



Dorcas in Albania



Dorcas started to work in Albania in 1992 and initially focussed on humanitarian aid and social care. Its work has since expanded to include health, childcare, agriculture and rural development projects, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and school reconstruction, and employment and vocational training. Since 2003, Dorcas has co-implemented projects with local partners to strengthen their capacity and improve the effectiveness and impact of poverty alleviation programmes. Dorcas always seeks to help the poorest of the poor and the most marginalised and is currently active in the Korçë and Tropojë regions.

In Albania, Dorcas works with the programme concepts Social Empowerment and Protection (SEP) and Inclusive Entrepreneurship (IE). In Korçë, SEP is realised through the approaches Community Safety Nets, Future4Children, Asset-Based Community Development, Local Resource Mobilisation and Community-Based Protection. IE in Korçë is realised through two approaches: entrepreneurship and employability. Entrepreneurship focuses on micro-entrepreneurs in sectors such as agriculture and

local tourism. Employability focuses on soft skills and short-term hard skill training, and linking to local employers. In Tropojë, SEP is translated into the Community Safety Nets approach and IE into the Entrepreneurship and Employability approach. These approaches have been incorporated into an Integrated Development Programme in Korçë and an Inclusive Communities Programme in Tropojë. These two programmes and their impact are described on the following pages.



Korçë Integrated Development Programme

Korçë Integrated Development programme (KID) supports older people, poor families, Roma and Gypsy children and marginalised communities. It contains four interlinked components that create synergy and make the interventions more sustainable. These are Future4Children, abandoned grannies through Community Safety Nets, Flourishing Families and Enterprising for Social Impact. An overarching aspect is reaching local and national government to request more attention, improved policy and action for marginalised groups.

Future4Children is realised in direct cooperation with Korçë Municipality and Kom over en Help. Its goal is to provide children from marginalised families with quality education, healthy food, psychological support and protection. The children come to day-care centres after school, where they receive a healthy lunch and then help from teachers and social workers to study and complete their homework. They are also taught about health and hygiene, develop life skills and participate in sports and other fun activities. Their parents learn parenting skills so that they can give their children better or more suitable support and also work skills to help them improve their family livelihoods.

The **abandoned grannies through Community Safety Nets** project seeks to reactivate older people, minimise their social isolation and give them a sense of dignity and value. Project staff regularly visit the grannies, bring them food and support them to restore and enhance relationships with family and neighbours. The project is transitioning from a sponsorship model to a sustainable local community safety net where the community and its institutions are mobilised and trained to care for this often marginalised group.

Flourishing Families focuses on families with a very low income. They are often unemployed, live in poor housing, lack a proper education and experience other socioeconomic problems too. We try to empower these families through a graduated approach. Each family eligible for the programme first completes a detailed assessment to understand their issues and potential. They then go through a learning and capacity-

building cycle based on their needs and desires. First, they learn soft skills and then they enrol in vocational training courses or business apprenticeships to prepare for employment or self-employment. Some of the families receive small grants to start their own businesses. We also reconstruct the homes of some families who live in miserable housing conditions.

Enterprising for Social Impact seeks to enhance the social and economic inclusion of vulnerable people based on business-driven initiatives. These are currently a social farm and a Dorcas Tourism Hub, which offers tourism services. Profits from these initiatives support Dorcas projects.

Tropojë Inclusive Communities Programme

The Tropojë Inclusive Communities Programme (TICP) overall objective is to improve the social and economic situation of local communities in Tropojë Municipality, especially for marginalised groups like the Roma. This is realised through four components:

- **Community-based social care and protection** structurally resources poor households to meet their basic needs, experience beneficial relationships in community safety nets and sustainably improve their income.
- **Resilient livelihoods** helps households with some resources and the potential to become self-sufficient through farming. It also enables them to become involved in community safety nets, increase their income and engage in representative groups.
- **Youth employment** helps youth from marginalised groups develop their vocational skills and find work or become self-employed.
- **Enterprising people and communities** enables cooperating farmers and tourism service providers to increase their income through increased market access and a larger customer base.



For each component, the programme seeks to realise an individual, community and society pathway of change. Through the individual pathway, the capacity of people or households to improve their livelihoods is increased. The community pathway enhances households' participation in community activities, community safety nets, and advocacy for proper public services. It also seeks to establish and promote cooperation between households from different sectors for mutual benefit and to strengthen the community's social and economic situation. Finally, in the society pathway, the programme collaborates with public institutions to proactively implement local policies that support basic services for people and improve the provision of social services.



Anila Mustavataj is 33 years old and lives with her husband Flamuri and their two children in a village in the Tropojë region. The family joined a Dorcas project that supported them with building their own greenhouse and that radically transformed their lives.

Life was hard for us before we became involved in the Dorcas project. We were both unemployed and did our best to survive on the little we had. We had few contacts and never asked for help. In 2018, Dorcas invited us to join a greenhouse project and they supported us with building our own greenhouse. From that moment on, our lives changed! Thanks to the greenhouse, we could grow more vegetables. That meant we had enough food to feed our family and generate some income.

But that was not all! We could also participate in capacity-building activities, trainings and

demonstrations, which helped us become part of a wider supportive community. These experiences helped us to change our closed mindset, where everyone only works for themselves. Now we cooperate more with our neighbours, relatives and community.

Thanks to Dorcas, we have made many friends. We talk, exchange seeds and help each other with the work. Furthermore, we've learned to look out for other families in need and give them some of our products. As our network expands, we're seeking ways to help these families even more because we realise their needs are greater than ours.

I believe that a strong local community is all about people helping and supporting each other. It creates good relationships and encourages a cooperative attitude. And it is good for business too!

'I hope for a better future for our children, relatives and community. We can achieve that if good people are committed to helping and supporting us. Dorcas are such good people.'

Sustainable Development Goals: Leave no one behind

Our programmes in Albania are directly linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, most notably:



Dorcas in Eastern Europe

Dorcas is active in Albania and the former “Soviet Block” countries of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. Besides the impact of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine, the region is confronted by the longstanding issues of widespread corruption, high rural poverty, the rural-urban divide in welfare, a lack of care for older people, and marginalisation of certain social groups – especially Roma and people with disabilities. Unfortunately, these problems persist due to weak governance and justice systems, poor social cohesion, failing employment policies, and various human rights issues. However, on a positive note, a gradual strengthening of organised civil society is taking place.



Our work

In Eastern Europe, Dorcas focuses on the programme concepts Social Empowerment & Protection and Inclusive Entrepreneurship. We implement these through a bottom-up approach informed by research, data and the Country Offices’ experience. Our programmes are mainly realised in local systems by building resilient communities with community safety nets and advocating for a just system. Dorcas is committed to developing a strong regional profile in Eastern Europe based on cross-border programming, learning and exchange, and the joint development of resources and partnerships.

Partners in Albania

Our Programme Partners:

- Emanuel Mission Foundation -Korçë
- Integration Association Tropojë - Bajram Curri

Our Strategic Partners and Donors:

- Kom Over En Help
- New Day Impact
- Municipality of Korçë
- Municipality of Maliq
- Municipality of Tropoëa
- Dutch Embassy
- MARA Foundation
- Swiss Contact

Partner with us!

I am Ilia Dishnica, Country Director of Dorcas Albania. I enjoy working with both (inter)national and local partners. Are you interested in a possible collaboration or wondering what contribution your organisation could make? Then please get in touch with me. I look forward to exploring the opportunities for a partnership with you.

Do you have any other questions about Dorcas’ work in Albania or would you like more information about a specific topic? Then please visit www.dorcas.org/albania or contact us.

Partner with us! Together we can realise lasting changes in the lives of people in need.



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We fight poverty, exclusion
and crisis. We empower
marginalised people and
communities to flourish.
This is how we follow
Jesus Christ.