



AMURTEL ROMANIA

ANNUAL REPORT 2012



Introduction to AMURTEL Romania

Asociatia de Ajutor AMURTEL Romania is an N.G.O. founded in 1992 by a group of national and international women volunteers. It is a local, women-managed branch of the international disaster relief and development agency, AMURT. After assessing the needs in post communist Romania, AMURTEL Romania specialized in the areas of inclusive education for children with special needs and social disadvantages and social services for abandoned children and youth. AMURTEL Romania's main projects currently include 2 inclusive "Neohumanist Education" kindergartens in Bucharest for a total of 45 children, including 7 with social disadvantages and 3 with special needs, the "Fountain of Hope" after-school center in Panatau for 65 disadvantaged schoolchildren, "Familia AMURTEL" a home for 10 abandoned children, and "Vistara Social Integration Program" for 5 young adults leaving care.

Mission:

The mission of AMURTEL Romania is to create inclusive programs for the economic and holistic personal development of children, young adults and parents at risk of social exclusion, as well as to intervene in disaster relief situations.



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE



Social Enterprise – The emerging future of AMURTEL Romania

This year saw a pronounced focus on social enterprise emerging as one of the organization’s new strategies for securing long term viable self-generated funding. This direction came in response to an important crossroads the organization is facing. Its traditional main source of funding from international sponsorships is slowly diminishing, as the founding members of the Verhein Kinderheim Association, founded by Cornelia Fischer in Switzerland begin to go into retirement, with fixed incomes, and less possibility to fund charitable works.

In the meantime, this trend corresponds with a growing need to provide transitional job insertion experiences to our Vistara young

adults. We have found that they do better when given the opportunity to gradually build up smaller successes in a protected work environment, than when thrust directly into the very competitive, open job market during a period when jobs are scarce even for well qualified candidates.

AMURTEL had the good fortune to be selected to participate in the NESST social enterprise competition. NESST is an NGO that is specialized as an incubator of social enterprise ideas, and has helped to develop and launch many of the most successful and innovative social enterprises in Romania, as well as in other Eastern European and South American countries. Social enterprise, in contrast to the

traditional profit motivated, capitalist approach to enterprise, sees businesses an opportunity to solve pressing social problems in an empowering way. Though social enterprises should be viable, competitive enterprises in order to be sustainable, the objectives of social enterprises are not only financial, but also they include social objectives, such as creating job insertion opportunities for disadvantaged people.

Over a 9 month period, AMURTEL benefited from NESST expertise in the form of free expert consultation and trainings as NESST guided us through a process of capacity assesment and then facilitated us step by step through pre-feasibility studies, feasibility studies and business plans for three project ideas: a Community Supported Agriculture project at our Poieni farm, a healthy snack-bar at the Patarlagele highschool and the Morningstar Holistic Center, which would offer services for mothers and children –starting with prenatal courses and infant massage as well as relaxation, yoga and stress management for mothers.



Catalin was one of our first Vistara youth to help at the farm!



AMURTEL Farm:

Number of CSA clients: 22

Income generated: 6,600 euros

Donors: Solidea, Italy 2000 euros

In addition, both the President and Executive Director of AMURTEL were selected for professional development programs in which they received certification as Social Enterprise Managers. Didi was trained within the Prometheus program run by FDSC, which besides the training, included an exchange visit to Italian cooperatives and social enterprises in Trentino, and a period of consultation for the farm project.

Thanks to this support and expertise, all of the business plans developed have continued to evolve and develop, giving a strong foundation for the future growth of social enterprises in AMURTEL.

Morningstar: An expert from Greece, who developed a program similar to the Morningstar concept, came to give training to our core staff in her “Inner Birthing” program, and a project for Morningstar

playgroups, designed to support at-risk mothers and their children was written for the Swiss Funds competition.

Snackbar: AMURTEL formed a partnership with the highschool and applied to the local government for permission to set up the project in the courtyard of the school. The highschool has been very supportive of the idea and is quite motivated, however we have encountered obstacles on the political level.

Farm: The AMURTEL Poieni Farm project was already launched in the summer of 2012, with 22 consumers enrolled in the program. It has also benefitted from grants that enabled us to build a well and 250 square meters of greenhouses. We were also selected to received expertise and consultation from the Prometheus program’s expert, Mihaela Bucsa.

Working towards sustainability

AMURTEL's Community supported agriculture farm: solidarity in the face of obstacles

This summer, AMURTEL Romania started up a Community Supported Agriculture project at our farm in Poieni, near to our Panatau projects in the rural countryside of Buzau county. The project aims to increase the self-sufficiency of our Familia AMURTEL children's home and Fountain of Hope after-school center, by growing our own food. This would reduce our costs, as well as providing high quality organically grown vegetables to the children benefitting from our programs.

The farm is also a social insertion project, designed to offer work experience to the young adults in our Vistara socio-professional integration program. These young people are leaving the protected care system of Familia AMURTEL, and in the future other such projects. Our experience has demonstrated that this process goes more smoothly if they have opportunities to gain practical work experience before entering directly into a competitive job market. This summer, Catalin worked at the farm as our first Vistara worker. The project was made possible due to the enthusiastic involvement of a dynamic agronomist, Gabi Corbu,

who volunteered his time designing the plan and supervising our workers. He also gathered together the initial group of Community Supported Agriculture consumers, from a group of activists in Bucharest. Parents from the Rasarit kindergartens also supported the initiative by signing up as members, paying an advance and a fixed price throughout the growing season in exchange for a weekly basket of vegetables.

It was a difficult summer due to intense heat and drought that damaged agricultural productivity throughout Romania, including our crops. The local community's water supply ran out, and we were unable to irrigate the crops for a few weeks – during which time we raised some emergency funds and constructed a well. We found a natural spring that was still flowing even in the midst of the drought, and were able to direct the water towards the well where it fills up rapidly. We also created a rainwater catchment system to direct water into an old dried up well near to the house.

However, despite the obstacles, the farm managed to produce more than 1000 kg of fruits and

vegetables which were delivered to the CSA members in weekly vegetable baskets. We had 14 members that stayed with us through the whole season, and 22 in total.

In November 2012, AMURTEL held a workshop at the farm: "Putting the garden to bed for the winter – preparations for autumn in organic agriculture." Professor Lagunovschi-Luchian Viorica from the Faculty of Horticulture from the University of Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences of Bucharest led the workshop together with Gabi Corbu, our agronomist volunteer. We had twenty participants, from other NGOs, the local community, Vistara youth and Bucharest. The practical component of the workshop involved constructing a raised bed – a special technique of organic agriculture that creates a favorable microclimate by burying wood and organic in the middle of a raised bed, which slowly decomposes into compost, attracting microorganisms that enrich the soil. The buried wood also regulates the moisture of the soil.

Gabi Corbu,
volunteer
agronomist
(left)

Digging of the
well during the
drought (right)





SOCIAL INCLUSION



CLUB TIP – “The Clever Kids of Panatau Club”

Club TIP (the Clever Kids of Panatau) was created in the summer of 2011, with the aim of offering young people from 8-16 the opportunity to become active citizens in their local community. This year the club continued its activities, involving both children from the Fountain of Hope’s afterschool and from Familia AMURTEL children’s home. The project received a modest financing from the Buzau county council for the summer program. The objectives were to foster leadership and teamwork, develop empathy and the spirit of service towards the other members of society and towards the environment we live in.

One of the successful activities of the club was cleaning up the garbage along the banks of the river that passes through the center of the village. This action was designed to encourage the children to take active steps to protect the environment. Our young ecologists were very

proud of the results of their efforts and said that they will scold those that they see throwing garbage where they aren’t supposed to.

In order to increase empathy and service spirit, the children prepared a meal for the elderly people in the community. They bought the food with the money they raised during a disco night they organized with music and dancing for other kids their age (just like the big ones!). After they cooked lunch and put it in containers, they went to the elderly people’s homes and gave them the food. The joy on the faces of the elderly while receiving the food, their tears and good wishes were very rewarding for the youngsters.

The young people also learned quilling, a technique of twirling paper to make flowers and other designs. They created a mosaic on the wall of a building next to the center, and helped with preparing vegetables for the winter.

The Fountain of Hope Afterschool Center, Panatau

AMURTEL Romania opened the Fountain of Hope Center in September 2007, in partnership with the Local Government of Panatau and the aid of grant from CNF (Cooperating Netherlands Foundation. It has since served more than 200 children.

In October 2012, it opened its doors for its 5th year of offering hot meals, homework support and a large variety of extracurricular activities. The project was designed to serve some of the most economically and socially disadvantaged elementary school students in this rural community. Numbers increased significantly in 2012 - in 2010 there were 30 children and now in 2012 the center opened with 65 students.

Fountain of Hope's Theme Song

For the 'Open Doors' day, a small group of children composed and recorded a song together with Didi. They wanted to sing the song in order to thank everyone who helped for what was offered at the 'Fountain of Hope'. Here you have some lyrics:

'At the center, at the center, every day, we come. Come with us, come, come with us. When we come here, we find our second home....'

Come and listen to the song on our facebook page:

www.facebook.com/izvorul



Fountain of Hope 2012

Total Expenses:
11,256 euro

AMURTEL:
4956,84 euro

Local gov't Panatau
4057,14 euro

Income generation
677,26 euro



Familia AMURTEL's new grandmothers:

This springtime, the Familia AMURTEL mothers became grandmothers! Magdalena gave birth to a lovely baby girl, who she named after "Maria Magdalena", sharing her own name with her. Gopi, Florin and Luminita travelled to visit her – and Magdalena was very happy to receive them. She is a very loving mother and taking good care of her baby. She has truly become a responsible adult now, as most of the time her husband is away working in Hungary and she is raising her child mostly on her own, with the help of the grandmother. She is living in a village in very simple, impoverished conditions but her heart is happy!



VISTARA
Social integration of young adults aged 18-26 leaving the care system



Vistara socio-professional integration:

As Catalin finished highschool in the summer of 2012, he entered in AMURTEL's Vistara program for integration into society as a responsible young adult! During the summer, he worked at the AMURTEL Farm together with our main farmer Geani, who grew up in AMURT's Domnesti home and is now a strong and hardworking adult. The farm work was strenuous at times, especially when they had to dig

a ditch to bury irrigation pipes that pump water from the well to the fields during an intense heatwave. We appreciated his help in launching the farm project for its first growing season!

He then attended a vocational training at the Concordia Trade-school, run by a partner NGO, where he worked and learned together with other young people also transitioning out of social protection programs. In preparation for Concordia, he learned how to bake his first bread - a lovely savoury walnut

bread! The lovely aroma of freshly baked bread filled the whole house, and everyone was eager to taste the results of the experiment, which he did end up sharing, though he would have loved to eat it all himself.

In the meantime, Timea is settling down in Switzerland where she is engaged to be married, and Elvira is working at the Fountain of Hope where she has her first 8 hour a day job!



Learning activism in Bulgaria!

Raising the curtain

A Youth in Action Project in Bulgaria!

In the summer of 2012, Network and AMURTEL Romania. The participants engaged in many activities designed to question stereotypes and embrace diversity as well as learn to utilize new techniques of activism such as flash-mobs, photo-voice and more. The project was a partnership between Pakiv European

Network and AMURTEL Romania. The participants engaged in many activities designed to question stereotypes and embrace diversity as well as learn to utilize new techniques of activism such as flash-mobs, photo-voice and more.

Passing on the torch:

“Mami” of Familia AMURTEL retires

After so many years of dedicated service to AMURTEL, Gopi Cornelia Fischer officially passed on the torch to Mirela Birla as the new director of Familia AMURTEL Panatau children’s home. It was a bittersweet moment, filled with many poignant memories, as the staff and children gathered to honor Gopi, better known as “Mami”’s contribution to their lives. Gopi arrived in Romania at the very beginning of AMURTEL’s work in the country, following the 1989 Revolution. During that time, she not only founded the Familia AMURTEL home, but also founded a charitable organization in Switzerland whose mission has been to raise the funds to support the children’s home. She has carried the home through innumerable obstacles and difficult times, as well as creating so many memorable and joyous moments that each member of Familia AMURTEL will carry in their heart for their whole lives. Her artistic and creative nature was expressed through the annual theaters she organized with the children for the local community, and other creative performances throughout the years, as she is a firm believer in the therapeutic value of artistic expression.



One of the many plays Mami directed



“FAMILIA AMURTEL”

Family-style children’s home

Annual budget: 60,000 euros



Familia AMURTEL’s children becoming young adults

In the summer of 2012, the kids from Familia AMURTEL spent several weeks at the AMURTEL Farmhouse in Poieni, enjoying the wide open spaces at the farm for running and playing, swimming in the nearby Buzau river and hiking through the hills. The kids also helped our farm manager, Giani, with preparing baskets of vegetables for the weekly delivery to the Bucharest consumers of the Community Supported Agriculture program.

Priya and Ionut’s meanwhile both had the opportunity to take a vacation with friends from the “Prietenia Association,” which has a very inspiring program for adults with disabilities. They have several work-therapy workshops including woodworking and gardening. They were involved in many daily household activities, something which Priya in particular loves, being one of our hardest working workers at Familia AMURTEL where she works as our dedicated cleaning assistant. Together with the other young people at Prietenia, they went on excursions to the ocean, the mountains and the Danube Delta.

For months after their return, both of them talked enthusiastically about the friends they made.

The summertime ended with a special trip to a salt mine in Slanic. It was fascinating for our young people to descend hundreds of meters under the earth, enjoying a respite from the intense summer heat in the natural air-conditioning of the deep, dark cathedral like cavernous mines carved out of salt. Many people go to the salt mines to benefit from the medicinal effect of the salt air – and indeed salt flecks glowed in the air looking like fuzzy stars in the pictures taken.

The kids stayed together with Luminita and Lily at a resort near to the mine, that has a natural salt lake, as well as fresh water swimming pools. In the concentrated salt water – the children found it was impossible not to float - yet not everyone enjoyed the sticky feeling of the salt or that it burned scrapes or cuts – so some opted for the fresh water swimming pool.



EDUCATION

Awakening the love of learning through creative, holistic and inclusive Neohumanist Education projects

“Gradinita Rasarit” kindergartens, with two locations in Bucharest



Rising popularity of Neohumanist kindergartens in Bucharest

The Gradinita Rasarit kindergartens have been enjoying increasing enrollments and high demand, which is a welcome relief after several years of crisis.

The program in the 2011-2012 schoolyear was diverse and creative in both kindergartens. In both locations, we invited our friends from the Fire Department, who came in fire fighter gear and taught the kids about fire safety.

The children celebrated world cultures by focusing on Egypt – and an Egyptian ambassador came to the kindergarten, presenting the children with papyrus scrolls and showing slides of his country. Our yearly theme of “Many faces, one human heart” about human diversity included a visit from Marius – a young man with cerebral palsy who attended the kindergarten when he was little, and Diipani Iulia Halangescu, AMURTEL's Executive Director who is of Roma ethnicity. The

kindergarten's approach to overcoming stereotypes is to form warm friendships with people from minority groups.

In Bucuresti Noi, a total of 7 socially disadvantaged children attended the kindergarten through a partnership with the Department of Social Services. It was a chance to make a difference in the lives of these small children, and the parents also benefited from guidance and support from our staff. This is another facet of our inclusive education program, in addition to the inclusion of 3 special needs children in Mihai Bravu kindergarten.

There were also several special excursions organized – one of the highlights was a trip to a traditional village of pottery makers, where the children got a chance to work on pottery wheels and play with clay.

Neohumanist Education represented at the "(R)evolutionar Portugal" Conference

Representatives of PROUTugal organized a two day conference in a public auditorium in Lisbon. Many progressive groups were represented, including Neohumanist Education, Transition Towns and the Permaculture Movement. There were seven panels, with a total of 27 presentations covering the following topics: Democracy and Civic Participation, Local Initiatives, Education, Socio-economics, Environment and Communities, Cooperatives.

Neohumanist Education was represented during the Education panel by AMURTEL's president, Didi A. Devapriya who gave a presentation on the practical application of NHE in teaching diversity values and overcoming stereotypes in early childhood education.

Following the conference, a group of parents who have been preparing to open a Neohumanist kindergarten, met with Didi to deepen their understanding of Neohumanist education, differentiate it from other alternatives, and receive some guidance regarding practical and legal concerns of opening a kindergarten.

Improving quality management for the kindergartens

Our Executive Director, Magda was selected for a course in Management of Quality standards for pre-university educational institutions that has also similarly resulted in a re-evaluation of kindergarten policies and procedures.



"Real education leads to liberation"

P.R. Sarkar, founder of Neohumanist Education

Public Relations Training for Kindergartens

Our president, Didi participated in a course on Public Relations especially designed for managers of kindergartens, which resulted in hiring a consultant to redesign the kindergarten webpage

Professional Development Training for Neohumanist Educators

Gradinita Rasarit kindergartens welcomed new members into our kindergarten teaching team, and in the 2011-12 school year they went through a well structured professional development program in Neohumanist Education in 4 Saturday sessions. The Neohumanist Education Curriculum that our team has been working on for the past

two years served as a basis for the training, and have helped to improve the integration of new members into the team, providing more clarity about the methodology and approach.

Neohumanist Curriculum finalized

The Neohumanist Early Childhood Education Curriculum underwent a rigorous review and revision process with the help of a committee formed by the international body responsible for the standards and quality of Neohumanist Education around the world and has at last received their endorsement. "A.E.N." The Association for Neohumanist Education submitted the Romanian version of the Neohumanist Curriculum to Ministry of Education for accreditation as a national educational alternative in November 2012.

Partnerships and networking

Our Executive Director, Iulia Halangescu was actively involved in promoting the organization both in Romania and abroad and creating new partnerships. She participated in an exchange visit organized to Strasbourg by the organization CRIES in which she visited several social economy projects, including community supported agriculture projects. She was also selected for a training about the "Transition Towns" movement that took place in Baiele Felix, and actively represented the association in the Local Initiative Group and Local Action Groups of Bucharest organized by CRIES. One of the results of the networking with the Local Initiative Group was that the group developed a collective project idea, "Different Farms" which was prepared for submission to the Swiss Funds.

The partnership with CRIES continued to evolve in a more formalized and concrete direction, towards creating a new form of Community Supported Agriculture in Romania, called Social Gardens. Representatives of CRIES, AMURTEL and Biohrana met to explore the possibilities of creating such partnerships in Bucharest in November.

Training in POSDRU fund management

AMURTEL's Executive Director participated in a training organized in Bucharest by the Development of Civil Society Foundation "FDSC" on the financial management of POSDRU Funds. The training was part of preparing the organization for further social insertion programs.

Mobilizing Resources, Washington D.C.

AMURTEL's president participated in a capacity building course held in Washington D.C. at the AMURT Global headquarters office. The training was funded by USAID.

AMURTEL presents "The Emerging Social Economy as a Response to European Crisis"

At the PROUT Convention in Vig, Denmark, Mariana Nitelea, together with Didi, were invited to present on the emerging "Social Economy" of Europe as a response to crisis. Our presentation started from the characteristics of a socially inclusive society where all people feel valued and their basic

needs are met, so they can live in dignity. In order to provide dignity for all we have to build a particular economy: the social economy based on solidarity.

Social economy represents a different way of doing business which associates general interest, economic performance and democratic administration (cooperatives, associations, mutual societies, social enterprises, etc.).

It aims at creating jobs by generating less consumption and more social responsibility, supporting local sustainable development (short chains producers-consumers), social and solidarity entrepreneurship (social tourism), solidarity and ethical finance (ethical banks), responsible consumption in favor of respecting biodiversity and environment.

PROUT Activist training

Mariana Nitelea and Didi participated in a PROUT Activist Training held in Vig, analyzing Proutistic responses to the Eurozone crisis. The groupwork done during the training resulted in depth analysis of complex causes and solutions for the European economic crisis, by applying the principles of PROUT practically.

Iulia Halangescu,
AMURTEL's
Executive Director

in Strasbourg on an
exchange visit
organized by CRIES

at the Bulgaria
"Raising the Curtain"
Youth in Action project



Thank you to our donors!

2012-2013

Thank you to all of the donors that have made our work possible! In addition to the donors listed to the right, many private individuals supported our work with donations. Each and every amount was greatly appreciated and hope you will continue to remain involved. Please come and visit us!



DONORS 2012:

Vervein Kinderheim, Switzerland

Solidea Fund, Italy

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AMURTEL USA

AMURT Italy

AMURT UK

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Fonte Nouva

Consiliul Local Panatau

Consiliul Judetan Buzau

Financial Report 2012

Income	184,496 EURO	Expenses	183,935 EURO
Income generation (kindergartens / farm)	65,286.00 euros	Bucharest: Kindergartens / Office	92,283.90 euros
Grants / donations	106,490.00 euro		
In-kind donations	1150.82 euro	Fountain of Hope	11,256.90 euros
Subsidies	total: 11,555.30 euro	Familia AMURTEL/ Vistara	80,394.00 euros
Law 34(children's home)	6,366.13 euro		
DGASPC Sector 1	671.23 euro		
Comuna Panatau	3,707.99 euro		
Agentia pentru plati in agricultura	798.78 euro		
Interest	14.74 euro		
CLOSING BALANCE	562.90 euro excedent		