

# Albania: development of agricultural cooperatives

*Oxfam GB*

Kiri village is high up in the mountains, two hours drive from the Northern Albanian town of Shkodra. The climate is very cold in winter and the mountainous terrain can leave families isolated, particularly during the winter months. People struggle to grow enough to feed themselves on small plots of land and most gather wild mountain herbs to sell for cash.

Albania's former communist regime forced people to farm 'collectively' and what they produced had to be given to the State. As a result, the Kiri villagers were very suspicious about associations and co-operatives.

In recent years, the people of Kiri were paid very poorly for what they collected. It is very hard work, starting at about 4.00am when it is cool, and continuing until early afternoon when it is hotter. When traders took the collected herbs, they would often pay late – or not at all.

Oxfam provided the capital to start the Herb Association, paid the taxes of the business during its first year, and helped to refurbish a collection point. Oxfam also supported the association with advice on Permaculture and marketing techniques including the best way to cut, transport, and dry the herbs. It gave the Association business training. Because the quality of the herbs was now higher, and they were selling in bulk, the community were able to approach new buyers and to get a better price for their product. The community has more confidence in itself and family incomes have increased in Kiri by as much as 40 per cent.

## Quotes

- 'Because of Oxfam's work, people have moved from being isolated individuals towards taking collective action.' Anila Vendresha, Country Programme Manager
- Pjeter, Kiri Association, 'Before, there was no co-operation between families. Now we believe in working together, and we co-operate with each other and get a better price for what we collect. Working abroad is not the only option for people here now.'

This case study was written as a contribution to the development of *From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World*, Oxfam International 2008. It is published in order to share widely the results of commissioned research and programme experience. The views it expresses are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Oxfam International or its affiliate organisations.

© Oxfam International June 2008

This case study was written by staff in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States department, Oxfam GB, in July 2007, based on information produced by Oxfam staff and partner organisations. It is one of a series written to inform the development of the Oxfam International publication *From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World*, Oxfam International 2008.

The paper may be used free of charge for the purposes of education and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured. Email [publish@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:publish@oxfam.org.uk)

For further information on the issues raised in this paper, please email [enquiries@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oxfam.org.uk)