

## **AMARO TAN SCHOOL**

### **an educational project of the Nehemiah Gateway Group in Albania**

#### **FACTS AND FIGURES**

**Goal:** To provide quality formal and informal educational programs as well as social services for the poor and needy in a largely Roma and Balkan Egyptian community.

**History:** In 1999, Nehemia Foundation ( now Nehemiah Gateway Albania Foundation) started two first "classes of hope" with 24 Roma and Balkan Egyptian minority children ( see below for more information on these minorities).  
These children didn't attend public schools and were taken out of street life and begging. Two teachers helped them teach to write and read.  
Thus the first attempts were made to create a school for these disadvantaged children through the cooperation of the then Nehemia Foundation with Youth with a Mission (YWAM) in Albania.  
In 2000, YWAM applied for an official recognition of the school as a Christian school and the school was registered under the name Amaro Tan, which it can be translated into English as "Our Place".  
In 2008, Nehemiah Gateway Albania (N.G. Albania) took over the school from YWAM and provided the necessary finances for the school to continue and grow.

**Structure:** Amaro Tan School is an educational project of N.G. Albania and constitutes not just a school but also a community centre. The school is located in the suburbs of the town of Pogradec, where also most of the pupils and their

families live. It currently has: 2 Kindergarten groups, 5 classes of Elementary School, 4 classes of middle school, extra-curricular programs for the children, sewing courses for women, social and medical projects as well as a soup kitchen. The administrative and teaching staff is all local Albanian.

**Programmes: Education**

The education program of Amaro Tan is the program taught also in Albanian public schools.

**Further Education**

- Summer school for about 40 children
- Stimulation of talents through afternoon courses for about 60 children in: sewing (only for girls), art and music, cooking, sports and mechanic, English and German language

**Medical and Social Work**

- Daily meals: breakfast only for preschool and warm meals for all the children (kindergarten and school; food packages for children
- Dental services and hygiene instructions, Medical visits, physiotherapy and scanning
- Home visits paid by our teachers and the social worker once a week and regular contacts with the parents.

**Spiritual Work**

- Daily devotionals for 20 minutes for each class before the lessons start with:
  - Bible stories, Christian songs and prayer time
  - Each pupil using his/her Bible for children
- Prayer and spiritual input for the staff given by pastors

**Students:** Currently, Amaro Tan numbers 139 pupils from preschool till the ninth grade. Of them 55 are Roma, 63 Egyptians and 21 Ethnic Albanian.

**Staff:** Amaro Tan School has 17 co-workers: 12 trained and experienced teachers who already 'have crossed the tracks' from normal Albanian culture to Roma and Egyptian culture, 1 social worker, 1 sewing teacher organizing and leading sewing courses, 2 assisting and caretaking staff and 1 part-time driver responsible for the transportation of about 60 children to and from school.

**Minorities:** Roma are assumed to have come from India, and the Egyptians are assumed to have come from Egypt. The linking factor between those two groups is that they are considered to be "Gypsy" by the majority of people in Albania. Despite the ethnic and cultural differences, the families of both communities live in extreme poverty, face social problems and suffer unemployment and discrimination. We are open to accept children who don't attend public schools or return from emigration. Once enrolled, all school services are free.

#### **Parents'**

**involvement:** Through the education of children, we attempt to reach out to their families as well, by engaging primarily children' parents in the education of their children. Additionally, through regular meetings and home visits, families of these children obtain helpful information on various topics, including on social and medical issues, and get more and more acquainted with the efforts of the school to provide education for their children and get the parents on board to support such efforts.

**Accreditation:** Amaro Tan is the only registered Protestant educational institution in Albania with an approved curriculum including biblical values.

**Financing:** The yearly financial support the school needs to provide its services to the children are approx. 150.000 Euro (or approx. USD 160.000). The school is financed exclusively through private donations of individuals and organisations, since the school does not receive state support and the pupils or their families are not paying any tuition or other fees. N.G. Albania as the holder of the project carries the major part of these financial support.

**Further plans:** N.G. Albania is considering strengthening the practical skills of the children and will offer them training and other skills necessary to pursue vocational education, as an alternative to p will lead them a professional school. Alternatively, pupils may also apply for admission to the Nehemiah Gateway University, a private higher education institution of N.G. Albania in Pogradec, Albania.