

BNP PARIBAS ®

THE FRIENDS OF VIISOARA – RCF – 30-01-2009

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Journalist: The Friends of VIISOARA, the name of a little village in the extreme north of Romania, formed their association in 1993 after visiting the region. The village is in an area of poor farmers who often at the time couldn't afford to pay for their children's schooling, and so it was this that the association decided to focus on. Christine MILLE, its treasurer, will tell us about the principles behind the association's activities.

Christine MILLE: The aim is to help young people continue their secondary school studies, because the fact is that over there the nearest school is 50 kilometres away, which means they have to spend the week away from home. Sometimes they can't even come home at weekends because the state of the roads makes it impossible. In winter the snow is often a metre deep, so they can't get home. You see, the families concerned are often very poor. Families of small farmers. So what we do is try to find the funds to pay for their education – the school, essential supplies, accommodation – basically, we try to help as much as we can. As regards the schools, we've provided lots of school equipment, things like that, because they had absolutely nothing. They had what was called a library, but it was in an appalling state so, with the donations we received in France, it was possible to turn it into a beautiful library worthy of the name, with new books and a reading room, to enable the young and not so young to rediscover themselves there. When we arrive at the village, when they greet us, it's like they were greeting someone important; we just see ourselves as ordinary people, but to them, well, this is a really big deal for them. And it's good for them to know that 2,000 kilometres away there are people who are thinking about them – that they're not forgotten. Because that was pretty much how they used to feel in that village, as they're rather isolated and they were a bit cut off from the world.

Journalist: The association works thanks to the gifts of its 65 members, gifts that have also made it possible to renovate the village pharmacy, for example, and, more recently, Viisoara has been receiving European aid – since Romania became one of the 27 members of the European Union.