

This project and its activities were initiated thanks also to the Omari family and, in particular, Manush Omari and Fatos Omari, who teamed up and negotiated this project with the GCDO. Unfortunately, they died before the house was restored. A wholehearted thank you to both of them and their families.

Project results

The project had a great impact with the following main achievements:

1. Omari House in Gjirokastra is fully restored.
2. Revitalization of the house is guaranteed; the two masters using the ground-floor shops are continuing to rent their shops, even though the rent-free period finished in 2013. The two masters and a woman artisan have contributed financially to the creation of an arts and crafts cooperative in Gjirokastra. They pay USD50 a month and hope to obtain some funds which will enable the registration of the cooperative. This is the first and very important sign of self-organization.
3. Ten young wood and stone carvers were trained (they were previously unemployed) for a period of six months under a carefully prepared curriculum. Two of them are already employed. All the trainees are thinking of working together to restore another house in the Bazaar, using the same method. They, the house owners and the Gjirokastra Foundation are lobbying for funds as we speak.
4. Women artisans of Gjirokastra have taken many training and skills development courses. Recently they produced new textile products with the help of a professional designer and have also made 14 traditional costumes for the young iso-polyphonic group (Figure 5).
5. The National Artisan Fair has been organized in Gjirokastra for seven years in a row by the Gjirokastra Foundation - the last one in September 2013. When a cooperative is created it will be in charge of organizing the fair and the Gjirokastra Foundation will supervise its work (Figures 6 & 7).
6. The young group of iso-polyphonic singers has recorded a CD and now performs at several local and national events. They were trained by a very well-known Gjirokastra iso-polyphonic singer (Figure 8).
7. The above method is already in its second very important and successful implementation; two houses – Babameto House I (a first category house in Gjirokastra) and a category two house – are being used by the Gjirokastra Foundation for a five-year, rent-free period. After the restoration, in collaboration with Cultural Heritage without Borders, one of the houses will be transformed into a heritage centre and the second one now hosts the ACIC. After restoring Omari House, ACIC will continue to work on Babameto House I where it has trained women in recycling and making souvenirs.
8. The project has a spin-off in Berat, another Albanian UNESCO World Heritage Town.