ASOCIAȚIA DE DEZVOLTARE INTERCOMUNITARĂ
ZONA METROPOLITANĂ CLUJ

400071 Cluj -Napoca, strada Zrínyi Miklós, nr. 7, ap. 2
+ 0364 401 479 | office@clujmet.ro | www.clujmet.ro



Apahida: Where Housing Becomes Belonging

A home gives a family a place to return to. Belonging grows through the relationships formed around it: neighbors becoming familiar, children playing together, women finding space to talk and support one another, and residents having a voice in the place they share. In Apahida, two residential buildings, each with six apartments, became home to 12 families from Pata Rât segregated area and a setting for community life to take shape alongside access to decent and inclusive housing.

Both *Social Interventions for the Desegregation and Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups in the Cluj Metropolitan Area, Including Disadvantaged Roma* (Pata 1 Project) and *Replicable Integrated Interventions for Inclusive Housing and Combating Marginalisation in the Cluj Metropolitan Area* (Pata 2 Project) were implemented by the Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association (CMA IDA). Across both projects, CMA IDA facilitated access to decent, desegregated housing through an integrated, participatory approach, connecting relocation with social support and the process of settling into a new community. Pata 1 Project included the construction of the two six-apartment buildings in Apahida and the purchase of 23 further homes elsewhere in Cluj-Napoca and the metropolitan area.

The buildings were constructed by Habitat for Humanity Cluj, a Pata 1 Project Partner, and designed by architect Cătălin Berescu. Their design process made room for community knowledge. During participatory workshops in Pata Rât, members of the wider community contributed with decisions, including how rooms would be divided and arranged. Residents brought their knowledge of family life, daily routines and practical needs into the conversation. Participation thus shaped the homes themselves and recognised the people who would live in them as contributors to the design process.

400071 Cluj -Napoca, strada Zrínyi Miklós, nr. 7, ap. 2
+ 0364 401 479 | office@clujmet.ro | www.clujmet.ro

Pata 2 Project carried that participation into the life of the two buildings. Both were renovated, renewing the homes and preparing the buildings for the next stage of their life. As the walls were refreshed, old marks of balls and the traces of little footsteps were covered, making room for new games, new footsteps and new family memories. The renovation became part of a continuing story: a renewed setting for the daily lives and relationships that make a place feel like home.

The buildings also became places to prepare for and practise collaborative living. Community gardening, women's gatherings, children's storytelling and library activities, play spaces, and groups on good housekeeping, organizing shared spaces and making decisions brought residents together around meaningful parts of daily life. A garden offered a reason to work side by side, a gathering offered time to listen and share, children's activities created meeting points for families. Through these repeated encounters, residents built connections with one another and with the wider community in Apahida.

Each family has a private home and the space to live its own life; shared activities create opportunities for cooperation, mutual support and participation. The project built social infrastructure: places and recurring practices that support everyday contact and help relationships grow. It strengthened ties among residents while creating connections with the wider community—an important relational dimension of desegregation. In this way, principles of co-production took shape through design discussions, shared activities and residents' contributions to their common environment.

In 2024, the process opened a further stage. Six highly vulnerable families from Pata Rât moved into the buildings; six other families who remained in Pata Rât received mentoring; and six families who had moved on from the buildings made the transition to inclusive housing. The experience of relocation thus became part of a wider chain of support, with families' knowledge and experience accompanying others through change.

The Apahida buildings hold both the promise and the practice of belonging. A secure home brings stability. Participation gives residents a voice. Relationships turn a group of households into a community. Through the integrated work of CMA IDA and its partners, the buildings became places where families could make homes, form connections and take part in shaping the life around

400071 Cluj -Napoca, strada Zrínyi Miklós, nr. 7, ap. 2
+ 0364 401 479 | office@clujmet.ro | www.clujmet.ro

them. Their renewed walls are ready to receive new traces of play and everyday life—and the growing feeling, for the families who live there, that this place is home.