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DEVECSER

RECONSTRUCTION IN HUNGARY



The red mud disaster in Ajka.

9 people in Kolontár and a man in Devecser were killed. Nearly 300 people were injured.

On October 04th 2010 at 2:30 the northwest corner of the 10th cassette of the alumina dam in Ajka suddenly cracked and collapsed. That moment meant the largest industrial and ecological catastrophe consequences in the history of Hungary ever. More than 1.7 million m³ of red mud spilled after the first shock wave and reached the outer houses of Kolontár in 8 minutes and moved over the village in 4 minutes. It reached Devecser in 44 minutes, but it took the flood just a half that time to deluge the major part of the city. Further along the watercourse the high pH alkaline polluting substance deluged 1,000 hectares of land and got into the river Raba, the river Marcal and to the Danube at Moson.

Fortunately a small percentage of the affected residents were staying at home that time and those, who saw the approaching danger climbed on rooftops, trees and houses waiting for the surging tide to retreat. Then, a couple of hours later they were rescued into the void. Just the uncertain empty future ahead of them. Three days after the Prime Minister arrived on the scene and announced that the government would fully compensate the victims and a fund was going to set up to help in the salvage procedure. The Disaster Management Office was appointed to recover the entire area and to take charge of the whole damage alleviation process. Among the red mud contaminated houses two categories emerged in the three villages, damaged buildings (364 units) and buildings deemed for demolition (286 pieces). The extent of injury of the affected houses was tested and estimated by experts, if the owner was not satisfied with it, he or she could ask for reestimation by authorities and real estate experts twice more.

After the dam burst the government contacted the Kós Károly Egyesület, and asked them to support the reconstruction procedure in Ajka with their experience gained at Bereg and Felsőzsolca during the flood. Forty architects in a couple of weeks developed 30 housing plan types with a selfless attitude and quick response time. Then go out to the workspace, adapt the plans, and along with the contractor assist the construction work management, which is actively accompanied by the members of the Vándoriskola funded by the association, in the form of postgraduate training.

The overall figure claimed building of 111 new housing units. 21 pieces in Kolontár 87 pieces in Devecser, one piece in Somlóvásárhely and two other houses were requested to be built in other villages.

After the division of the parcels the work on the construction began, what had been assigned to VeszprémBer Zrt., the winner of the public procurement as a general contractor.

Twice weekly the residents could present their requests to the designers at the Mayor's Office in Devecser. The request forms were then forwarded to the contractor, who assessed the feasibility of the request. They also organized a four-time visit to the office for the residents, who gave mostly positive feedback and were satisfied with the level of compensation. The birth of the new houses is based on a bad memory and it is empty, as time goes by the bad memories will fade but the houses will remain.

