



2020-2021

Trust for Social Achievement

F O U N D A T I O N



5

AREAS OF SUPPORT

168

TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS

41

GRANTEES

97 782

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

3,666,000 leva

TOTAL PROJECT FUNDING

17

DONORS

Raya and her path to become a teacher

“ I was in a hospital in Germany, when I got a call from the principal of the “1st of June” kindergarten in the village of Buthan. I was working there as an assistant teacher. ”



This call turned Raya Simeonova's life upside down. Fate was confronting her with the most difficult of challenges. Her fourteen year old son, Malin, had been battling cancer since he was two. His doctors in Bulgaria could not do any more to help, so Raya and her son had traveled to Germany.

And exactly when she was 2000 km from her homeland, Raya was given the news that the Trust for Social Achievement was initiating a project that could help her make her dream come true by receiving support to become a young Roma teacher.

This is how Raya's long path began. With the help of the “Young Roma Teachers” project she managed to prepare for her university admission exams to become a kindergarten teacher. At the time Raya was working two jobs but she successfully passed her exams nonetheless and was admitted in the Vratsa branch of the Veliko Tarnovo University.

“I am proud to be a good example for the children in the kindergarten and their parents. When a child runs towards me, saying ‘Miss, I love you so much, you’re my favorite teacher’ – it’s a moment, I wouldn’t trade for anything”, says Raya.

80% of the children in the “1st of June” kindergarten in Buthan are from Roma families. Though Roma in this village are quite integrated and many Roma complete a university education, according to Raya, there are still community members who don't value the need for literacy. Their children encounter difficulties in learning the Bulgarian language. This is why Raya thinks that one of the key advantages of Roma teachers is that they are bilingual and can help these young pupils. This is an additional argument for the crucial role of and need for such a project that not only contributes toward personal

development, but also helps motivate Roma children and youth to continue their education.

While Raya persists in her journey, 2020 delivered her another challenge. “My son got sick again. I was so crushed, but my husband insisted that I continue and he took the lead in caring for our son. The fight for Malin's health continues to this day, but now I know that what doesn't kill us makes us stronger”, she shares.

Despite the tough challenges, Raya will soon become a qualified children's teacher, with the university diploma she has dreamed of for so long in hand.

Since the “Young Roma Teachers” project began in 2018, 44 people have received support to prepare for and attend university. Participants also get to practice teach in kindergartens that are partners in the project.

Spark the inspiration

“ I’m still at the stage of looking for my place in law. ”



Born in the small town of Hadzhidimovo near Gotse Delchev, Zdravko Zdravkov has always loved reading and feeding his curiosity about the world around him, ever since he was a child. At some point, his love for literature also sparked his interest in law.

“I’m still at the stage of looking for my place in law – looking for the precise profession that will inspire me”, says the young man. He’s part of the first Legal Incubator in Bulgaria, created at the end of 2019 with the support of the Trust for Social Achievement.

“For me, this was an excellent opportunity, through this project, I was confronted with the issues of real people – stories, which even experienced lawyers and mediators often want to achieve on behalf of their clients, as an opportunity to prove oneself and as an opportunity for work and practice”, shares Zdravko.

11 participants have already finished the first stage of the Legal Incubator. Among them are law students and young people with a keen sense of justice and a desire to do volunteer work. The aim of the initiative is to provide free legal services and consultations to people from vulnerable communities with low incomes who don’t have access to legal aid. During their training in the Incubator, the young people rely on the mentorship of experienced lawyers.



The second stage of the Legal Incubator will include 30 new participants and will take place in the summer of 2023.

Zdravko heard about the Legal Incubator when he was talking to a friend of his who is a doctor and a

role model of sorts; a good example for young people from the community. “I’m very grateful to this day that he encouraged me to apply. For everything he taught me during these last two years of work, the contacts that I made, the opportunities I was given – to get a professional specialization in the sphere of discrimination and racism”, Zdravko says. The young man sees the Incubator as an opportunity to fight inequalities in society. For two years, Zdravko has worked on 54 cases. “I helped, for example, with the issuing of property deeds for people who have lived for over 20 years in homes that were built on lots that nobody claimed.” Zdravko is certain that he couldn’t receive the experience he has gained even in the most prestigious of law firms.

At present, he’s an intern in the New Balkans Law Office and is continuing on the path of law, guided by his desire and ambition to receive a law license.

Vasil and the Family Home

“ Don't sell your family home even if all you've got to eat is bread, salt and onions. ”



This is what Vasil Ognyanov (68) from the Kavakliya neighbourhood in Dupnitsa says. His whole life, he has been a welder in one of the biggest factories in Dupnitsa". All his savings vanished in the mid-90's and the only valuable thing that he had left was the house he inherited.

The house was built by his father when he moved to Dupnitsa in 1956. Vasil has never lived anywhere else.

"When we moved to Kavakliya in 1956, there was no water, electricity or sewage. It's the same now. All of the other neighbourhoods have improved, and only Kavakliya remains the same. We bought our lot here with fake papers. We wanted to live here because it was close to the tobacco factory, and for people with our background that was the only option for work. With a lot of hard work and multiple deprivations, my parents managed to build a small house. We would host different people who arrived from the villages with the

hope of building a better life and finding work in the town. This is how the neighborhood was growing right in front of my eyes", says Vasil.

Years later, he invested all his savings in the house, so that it could be a real home. The one thing that has continued to bother him his whole life, however, was that he had no documents for the house.



Now, people in the neighborhood are little by little starting to hope again, and they want to live in accordance with the law.

Thanks to the investments made by the TSA and the new detailed urban development project for the neighborhood, new zoned plots are being parceled out under every building. These

will help the people living there to gain ownership of their lots. In addition, some properties were set aside in which a variety of social services can be developed for sustainable improvement of the living environment in the community.

If there's no urban planning, there's no access to the basic necessities of life. Urban

planning also addresses roadblocks to municipal spending in the community as well as provides incentive for external fundraising. As a result a productive partnership established between the municipal administration and TSA, an opportunity was identified to apply for external funds to help cover the cost of social spaces in the community.

Lazar and the Miracle of Bread

Kneading bread dough is a miracle. At the beginning you have only flour, water and salt. And then you create magic with your hands. Lazar is kneading the dough and his eyes are gleaming.



His entire life, he's been dreaming of working with bread. He graduated from the Bread and Confectionery Technology High School in Sofia, which is where he first discovered his passion. Now, Lazar Kirilov is a graduated engineer with a degree in "Sugar, Bread and Confectionery Technology".

Like every young person, while he was studying, he felt he lost his way.

"In 2014 I was a young boy who didn't know what I wanted from life. And then a friend of mine told me about the opportunities offered by "Arete". I applied to the "Forward Together" program almost as a joke, and then it turned out to be the most amazing adventure I've been on. After the camp, I became a volunteer for the foundation."

"Arete" had his back when he decided to pursue higher education. Snezhina Slaveva, head of the education program of the foundation, made a trip with him to the Food Technology University

in Plovdiv. This inspired him to apply and study even more.

The "Information and Education Centre" program of the "Arete" Youth Foundation aims to support young people who want to pursue higher education. Through info sessions and visits to universities in the country, as well as through mentorship, "Arete's" team helps young people choose the right degree and university. Every year, 120 high schoolers are presented with opportunities to continue their studies. Nearly 25 teachers work with 50 students every year.

"Arete" is one of Trust for Social Achievement's many partners through which we achieve our mission to help more young people study, graduate and continue with their professional and personal development. For the past ten years, TSA has funded youth camps in which about 600 high schoolers have taken part. Thanks to the socialization and motivation they receive

during the events, over a third of the students apply to university and continue with their studies. Among them is Lazar, who was accepted into his first choice of university. Currently, he's at the end of his bachelor's degree and wants to continue onto a master's.

"Through all these years I had an amazing person by my side, a true professional. My personal and academic mentor, the vice dean of the Faculty of Economics, Associate Professor Ivan Obreshkov. Whenever I call him, he greets me with care, ready to help in any way that he can."

And then, he cites Churchill: "Success is not final; failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."



Rumiana, Who Dreams of Helping Others Heal

“ I want my children to be proud of me. For them to see that I’ve started studying despite my age. ”



Rumiana is from Byala Slatina. She is 36 and the mother of three. Until a year ago, her life was progressing as expected – she finished school and got married soon after.

Rumiana has bigger dreams – she wants to help others heal by finding work as a midwife or a nurse. Encouraged by the health mediator in her community and supported by her husband, Rumiana became one of sixteen first-year university students supported by the Trust for Social Achievement through the Home-Visitors Scholarship project.



This is the only scholarship project aimed at adult women who have finished high school, who have started families, and who want to work on

their personal development. The project began with a campaign organized by the Student Society for the Development of Interethnic Dialogue (SSDID) to recruit candidates. Already in the first weeks, many were attracted, because they understood that the serious shortage of healthcare workers makes it nearly guaranteed to find a job guaranteed.

“I want my children to be proud of me. For them to see that I’ve started studying despite my age. I want to see them tell themselves that their mom is now tackling online education, even though she had no clue about how to work with computers before”, says Rumiana.

Another motive the participants bring up is their desire to help improve the quality of healthcare that the Roma community receives. “I want to work in our hospital in Byala Slatina. Many times, when I take my kids there, I see how people don’t receive the attention they need”, Rumiana adds.

After taking part in intensive courses for university admission that lasted several months, the chosen candidates took the admission exams. Out of 20 participants in preparatory courses, 18 were admitted. At the moment they are receiving a scholarship that covers their university fees, textbooks, transportation and personal expenses.

In addition to the financial aid, students receive mentorship from specialists who have already graduated and are currently practicing.

The personal example of the women who followed their dream to graduate university will motivate more young girls and women from their social circles to follow in their footsteps.

“Now it’s me telling the girls about the course and helping them apply”, says Rumi. In 2022 the TSA will support another 15 women with courses for university admission and scholarships.

Angel, who dreams of the stars

“ Together, we learned how to develop our leadership skills and then put them into practice in the tasks we were given! ”



Angel works with his hands and he dreams of the stars. The seventeen-year old student from the Technical Professional Gymnasium “Nikola Yovkov Vaptsarov” in Radomir spends all of his spare time reading science fiction books. At the moment he’s reading Elit Nikolov’s “Extraterrestrial Thoughts about the Terrestrial”.

Angel Angelov is an ordinary boy like all his peers. In his spare time he plays tennis table. Unlike many of his peers, however, Acho (short for Angel) volunteers as part of the network of the “Arete” Youth Foundation, one of TSA’s grantees and partners. Currently, along with some of his friends, he’s planning his first volunteer projects to help people from the neighbourhood where he grew up.

He describes volunteering as a long path towards others, while also moving toward the most intimate parts of oneself. It is the desire to help someone else and to

transform the world into a better place.

Angel’s path began in the summer of 2021. This is when he took part in the National Camp for Leadership Skills “Forward Together” – a key activity of “Arete” . These camps aim to help young people to acquire new knowledge, cultural skills and confidence, so that new Roma role models can emerge who will contribute to the development of their communities. Every year around 50-60 young people who are still in high school take part, with at least a third of them then continuing their education at the university level.

The camp increased Angel’s confidence in his own abilities. It gave him the push to believe even more in himself and his future.

“The whole camp was like an incubator for ideas and motivation! We gathered together from different parts of Bulgaria and each of us brought something different

with them, which ultimately helped the rest of us. Together, we learned how to develop our leadership skills and then put them into practice in the tasks we were given!”

After the camp, Angel immediately found supporters and founded his own volunteer group. He’s part of the “Peers Help Peers” program of the “Arete” Youth Foundation, where along with his mentor, he will be preparing for his future exams. Speaking of exams, Angel’s dream is to study kinesiotherapy. He has chosen this degree because he doesn’t just wants to help people socially, but also physically.

Angel would like to be remembered as someone who can always be trusted. What he wants to share is that everyone can be a good example to follow, as long as they have the right attitude and an unyielding desire for success!

Nikola Dreams of a Home for his Children

“ I want my children to get an education and to live in a home which gives them security and peace. ”



Nikola Furnadzhiev dreams about his children going to school, building them a home and all of them living in a normal environment. He's a builder and part of the Community Council in the Lukovitsa neighbourhood.

It was difficult for him to finish high school. Money was scarce. But his parents always supported him in everything he wanted to do. He became a builder – internal lining, drywalling, painting and plastering are his specialty. He got married and became the father of four daughters. He's proud that the oldest one – Annie, has finished a course in English in the “Code Success” project of TSA.

Nikola's biggest dream is to live with integrity and in accordance with the law. This is why 15 years ago he bought the land on which his house is built. However, because of family property disputes the deeds of a house still can't be changed.

This prompted Nikola to buy a lot from a regulated

and subdivided plot zoned for local families through the TSA's “Urban Planning – Everybody Wins” project.

The Trust for Social Achievement's efforts started back in 2014 in four neighborhoods in the towns of Peshtera, Dupnitsa and Kyustendil. Different approaches were required to meet the various challenges encountered while regulating and working to include each of the neighborhoods in the urban plan. Based on successful results achieved in these three neighborhoods, TSA now aims to ensure that nearly 2000 families live in secure and legal homes. We are also carrying out an active campaign to disseminate the tested model in 30 other towns and cities in Bulgaria.

With this mission and goal in mind, new, legal construction will take place in Peshtera's Lukovitsa neighbourhood, adhering to the regulatory framework of the Planning and Development Act. People will become owners of land

and legal homes. They will live in a secure environment, children will grow up in more peaceful settings. They will contribute to the city budget by paying their taxes and by participating as active citizens in their communities. Their addresses will be registered, they will be given National IDs so that they can have better access to healthcare, education, and social welfare.

In short – they will live the lives of normal Bulgarian citizens.

“I want my children to get an education and to live in a home which gives them security and peace”, says Nikola as he picks up the tools with which he's about to build his new home.

Patricia's Kalimba



“ Life can be a caterpillar,
but it can be a butterfly too. ”

Do you know what a kalimba is? The kalimba is a musical instrument from Zimbabwe which very few can play. It looks like a piano, but instead of wooden keys it has metal plates.

Under Patricia's fingers, the instrument comes to life and the listener quickly travels from Lom to the distant lands of Africa. The Kalimba is only one of Patricia Achkova's many talents. In addition to the kalimba, she plays the piano and the guitar, and she's constantly in the process of learning how to play other musical instruments by herself.

One of her dreams is to publish a poetry book, as she writes poems too.

Pattie, which is what her friends call her, is among the 15 scholarship holders who the Trust for Social Achievement is currently helping to graduate from high school. The Trust is helping a total of 564 high school students in 2020/2021 through the "Equal Chance: Access to Secondary

Education" program, funded by the TSA. The goal of the program, which was started 11 years ago, is to provide equal access to education to motivated students in high school who come from underprivileged families, by covering expenses for transportation and textbooks. Around 4000 scholarships have been awarded so far. Thanks to this targeted support, over 89% of students graduate with a high school diploma, and 53% of them continue their studies in higher education, according to a study carried out by Alpha Research in 2018.

In addition to receiving support through "Equal Chance", Patricia is part of the volunteer network of the "Arete" Youth Foundation. "Volunteering is a way to show that you care, a way to show that something can change for the better and most of all a way to inspire hope in the places where this little light has gone out. It is a way to give an example that inspires young people to do good and

to help their communities", she shares.

Her biggest solace and passion is writing. Her dream – to write a poetry book in the future – is starting to blossom.

Recently, she has started thinking of studying journalism as well.

“Life can be a caterpillar, but it can be a butterfly too. I believe that it's important for the media to show the positive sides of life and not accentuate only the negative aspects of being.”, says the young woman.

Her message to Roma youth is for them not to be ashamed of who they are, but to fight for their self-development. To leave a trace behind them and in people's hearts, and to aim to be an example for working towards a better world!



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