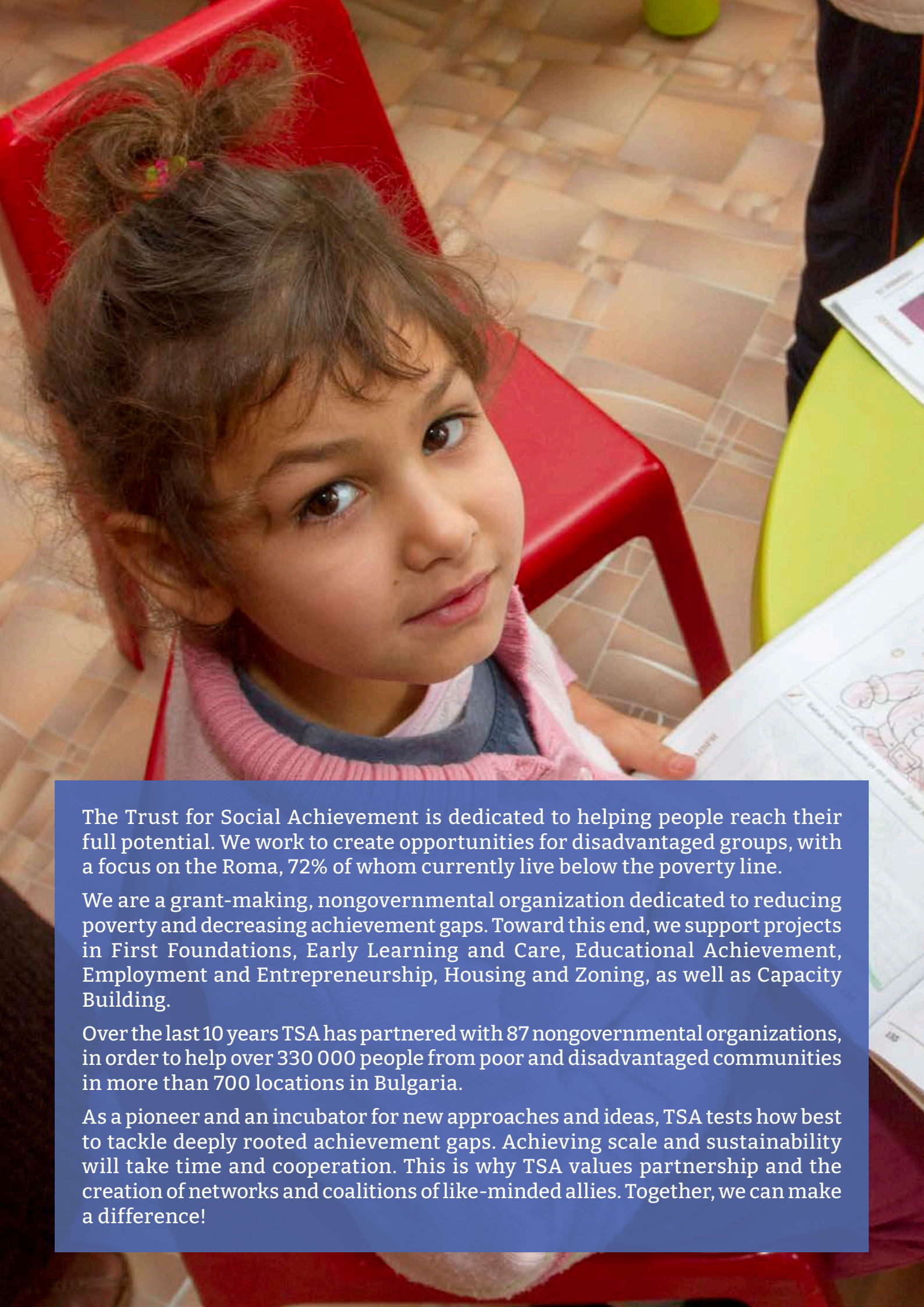




2022

**TRUST FOR SOCIAL
ACHIEVEMENT**



The Trust for Social Achievement is dedicated to helping people reach their full potential. We work to create opportunities for disadvantaged groups, with a focus on the Roma, 72% of whom currently live below the poverty line.

We are a grant-making, nongovernmental organization dedicated to reducing poverty and decreasing achievement gaps. Toward this end, we support projects in First Foundations, Early Learning and Care, Educational Achievement, Employment and Entrepreneurship, Housing and Zoning, as well as Capacity Building.

Over the last 10 years TSA has partnered with 87 nongovernmental organizations, in order to help over 330 000 people from poor and disadvantaged communities in more than 700 locations in Bulgaria.

As a pioneer and an incubator for new approaches and ideas, TSA tests how best to tackle deeply rooted achievement gaps. Achieving scale and sustainability will take time and cooperation. This is why TSA values partnership and the creation of networks and coalitions of like-minded allies. Together, we can make a difference!

5

AREAS OF SUPPORT

125

ACTIVE PROJECTS

38

GRANTEES

41 149

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

4,486,706 leva

TOTAL PROJECT FUNDING

10

DONORS

A businesswoman in a man's world



Precisely when Sasha Kirilova was struggling with the loss of her father, life presented the 28-year-old with a gift.

Growing up in the mountain town of Razlog, the young woman developed and managed several heavy goods transport businesses in the country and abroad.

"I never imagined that I would be doing this. Both of my university degrees are related to public relations. I worked in the NGO sector and then in municipalities, gaining recognition and excellent recommendations, but I never felt like I had found my place," says Sasha. She felt that she lacked the freedom and responsibility to make decisions.

"My father was the best entrepreneur I'd ever known. I inherited this mindset from my father. He created my company from scratch," shares the young woman.

After looking for a professional calling in a variety of places, Sasha eventually decided to dedicate herself to the family business. In the beginning, she only made deals for various international freight, while her father closely monitored

the execution process. The business quickly grew – they managed to upgrade the company's set of vehicles and to hire more employees.

"Everything was going so smoothly, until one terrible day I received the unexpected news of my father's death. This tragedy not only broke me as a person, but also temporarily shut down the business for a few months," shares Sasha. She even considered closing down the entire business.

But with the difficult moment also came a new opportunity. Sasha learned about BASE (Business Academy for Starting Entrepreneurs.) Despite some hesitation, she decided to join the courses and to rekindle her desire to work again. *"I've always*



felt inspired when helping different companies to solve their transportation issues," says the young woman.

"BASE reminded me of who I am and why I shouldn't give up when the going gets tough. It taught me that the right time is today and now, not tomorrow."

TSA helped 16 people who were driven by a similar ambition to develop and gain knowledge to sign up and participate in BASE between 2021-2022, seven of whom also developed successful business plans. Another three have already started their own businesses thanks to the course and mentors, with one additional person expanding their existing business.

Like any entrepreneur, Sasha does not plan to limit herself to what she has achieved so far, and she is already working to expand her company and team.

Families work to legalize their homes



“ I want a home in which my child has a room of her own. ”

This is what 24-year-old Kostadin Katrandjiev, who works as a machine worker at the Biovet plant in Peshtera, says.

Currently Kostadin and his wife do not even have their own home, they live in his father's house. And like a number of other families in their Roma community, they live under the same roof with three other families, which of course makes it uncomfortable.

“There are 20 of us living under one roof and it's not easy,” says Kostadin

His wife Raina was educated in Bulgaria until the 6th grade and then completed her secondary education in England. She enrolled in college with a major in pharmacy, but dropped out after three months to return to Bulgaria. Here she met her love. Not long after, she and Kostadin got married and soon after their daughter was born, who is now two years old. Their living conditions over

the past three years have now forced the young family to look for new opportunities. So when they found out about TSA's initiative to regulate informal Roma houses, Raina and Konstantin decided to buy a plot of land in the Lukovitsa neighborhood in Peshtera. “We want to have a normal family home, which has a kitchen, a children's room, a bathroom, a bedroom and a living room,” says Raina. She saved money from her time in England, which she will now invest in building the house.

“We want our children to be brought up here, and we will do everything possible to help them develop academically so that they have a good future,” says the father.

The Trust for Social Achievement is developing and implementing a model of Roma neighborhood regulation in Peshtera, Dupnitsa and Kyustendil. The team has the ambition to help about 2,000 families get their

own property and a formalized home. TSA assists by providing a team of experts, including architects, and engineers to first prepare zoning plans. The Foundation then provides support for a Community Investment Fund to sell plots to families and to advise them on the construction of their homes. The project has been implemented with the successful cooperation of the local administration.



Based on our successful experience, our team has shared lessons learned with 30 other municipalities in the country that could potentially benefit from our piloted zoning practice.

I had a thousand reasons not to be in school

“ I had to stop going to school and to take responsibility for my family. I was only in the 9th grade. ”



22-year-old Ivan Borisov, a young man of Roma origin, was born and raised in the capital of Bulgaria. He graduated with honors from the Vocational School of Textiles and Leatherwork. His skills and dexterity allowed him to compete in several dress-making competitions, where he had the opportunity to travel around the country and imagine how he would one day practice this profession. While in school, Ivan discovered not only his professional vocation, but also his great love. She was only 16 years old, and he was 17. Many young people their age might have continued to study and to date, but they got married.

“There’s no going back once you’ve been with a girl. According to Roma traditions, this moment is extremely important, and our parents insisted that we get married,” says Ivan. *“I had to stop going to school and to take responsibility for my family. I was only in the 9th grade.”* Soon after, their daughter was born.

So, Ivan enrolled in night school, working 12-hour shifts. For three years, from Monday through Friday Ivan would come home at 11 p.m. and start studying. He would study all night then get ready at 5 a.m. for work again.

“I had a thousand reasons to quit, but I didn’t. I knew exactly what I wanted to accomplish, and what I owed myself and my family”

“A very large number of my classmates were dropping out of class because they weren’t literate enough or didn’t know Bulgarian well. In the end, when I saw the diploma in my hands, I cried with happiness. It motivated me even more,” says Ivan.

Soon after graduating, the young man saw an advertisement for free English lessons, which the Trust for Social Achievement was offering through its „Earning by Learning“ project.

“I could see my dreams coming

true one by one,” says Ivan. While studying English, the young man also passes on the English he has learned to children he knows from a church where he lives.



Ivan currently works as a cook. Soon he will have a master’s degree in Psychology. His greatest wish is to keep moving forward and to not give up.

I can be anything I want to be

“ I chose teaching because in addition to being a childhood dream of mine, the teaching profession is important to society and always in need of new cadre. ”



“Ever since I was in school, I dreamed of working with children. When I was a teenager, I danced in the Roma folk group ‘Sham’ and I imagined singing with my own little students, and showing them the alphabet and pictures. Unfortunately, like many young girls from my community, I got married too early - right after finishing the 12th grade. I wasn’t able to win support from my husband’s family to enroll in a pedagogical degree. My husband was against my continuation at a university, because he was influenced by his parents’ opinions, and they in turn were guided by the traditions of the community.”

This is the story of Radostina Kamenova from the city of Montana.

It is not typical for a Roma woman to pursue a higher degree. She should be a housewife and a mother first and foremost.

“But when I started working as an assistant at the Family

Consultative Center six years ago, my husband’s relatives realized that my outside employment did not interfere with my family commitments. My husband also began encouraging me to apply to the university.

The most decisive motivation came from my sister and cousins, who have master’s degrees in different fields and well-paid jobs.

I chose teaching because in addition to being a childhood dream of mine, the teaching profession is important to society and always in need of new cadre.



This year I will earn my bachelor’s degree. I worked

for three years as a social worker and during my last year of study, I was also an educational mediator at a school in Montana. My experience working with children from vulnerable communities convinced me unequivocally that they must be included in the educational system as early as possible.”

Radostina is a participant in the Young Roma Teachers project, which is currently helping 43 young Roma to become teachers. The project first supports preparation and application to the university and then later helps participants to find a job in their field.

“I admit that my four years of study at the university have not been easy. I went through a lot of challenges that demotivated me. I would love for my story to serve as an example for other Roma to see that it is never too late to make your dreams come true.”

Future Roma medical professionals spark interest in dental health for children in Sofia

Aleksey Mitkov, a young man from the town of Lom, who became an ambassador of kindness.



Aleksey made a campaign for the benefits of oral hygiene, dental health and tooth decay prevention among children from vulnerable groups in Sofia's neighborhood of Fakulteta.

Aleksey is a student at the Medical University of Sofia, where with a lot of hard work and dedication he studies Dentistry. In line with his future profession, he understands how important it is that information about children's dental health be widely circulated, especially among the most vulnerable communities and people with a limited income.

In Fakulteta, from a very early age many children do not have access to a dentist. Adult awareness of dental check-ups is also limited.

"The first time I visited the Fakulteta neighborhood, I saw that it looked like any other Roma neighborhood in that there was an internal division between wealthier and poorer inhabitants – you could tell by the houses. But there were also

visible signs of integration. The good thing is that both young and older children came to the event, asked questions, and wanted to learn more," says Alexey.



Aleksey is a participant in the Health Scholarship Program for students of Roma origin. More than 160 year-long scholarships have been awarded since 2018 with the support of EEA/Norway. 58 of these scholarships were awarded during the 2021-2022 period. Since the program began, nearly 30 young people have successfully graduated and are now working as health professionals. The scholarship aims to help more young people to study health-related disciplines, and to then improve health awareness among disadvantaged communities.

In October, young participants in the program participated in an event hosted by TSA's partner, the HESED Foundation. This event brought together dozens of children and parents. While coloring thematic materials with the children, the students talked about proper ways to brush their teeth. This meeting also gave many mothers the opportunity to get tips on their children's dental health.

"Many of the families and children understood the reason behind the event. They are ready to live in an integrated society," says one of the students.

Aleksey, together with 10 other student participants, received the Ambassadorship Award in the Volunteer category of the 5th Annual Time Heroes Platform Awards. They were recognized for their initiatives in 2021 and 2022, when they carried out health campaigns in Roma communities.

A driving force to serve as a good example

“ I’ve always wanted to serve as a good example for women in my community. It is a personal mission – to show Roma girls that they can be educated, and knowledgeable. ”



Zdravka Angelova drew on this belief when she started down a professional path to become a health mediator in the Nurse Family Partnership project, a home-visiting service of the Trust for Social Achievement.

Zdravka is now 28 years old and lives in the Fakulteta neighborhood in Sofia with her two children. In 2013 she was on the verge of being named the neighborhood rebel. After graduating from high school, she waited another 2 years before getting married and even worked for a time as a hairdresser – “all life choices that are unthinkable for many young people in the neighborhood,” Zdravka recalls.

In 2016, when she was pregnant with her first child, Zdravka enrolled in a parenting skills class organized by the Health and Social Development Foundation.

“It was there that I learned about the Nurse Family Partnership project, through which young mothers get help raising

their children up to the age of two. I found out that they were looking to train people from the community to help the home-visiting nurses and I immediately applied – I just knew that this was my calling,” says Zdravka.

“It was really very hard for me. I couldn’t sleep at night, because I was taking care of my son, and then I had to go out into the field with the nurses as well as go through the mediator training. But I’m proud that I didn’t give up,” emphasizes Zdravka.



She shares that it is now becoming fashionable in the community to have an education, to get a driver’s license, and to achieve

something. “Many of the mothers that participated in the project are now working and their children go to kindergarten. With our work we plant a seed and after years we are able to see it in reality,” Zdravka points out the long-term benefits of the service.

This service includes a team of nurses and midwives in Sofia and Plovdiv, who carry out home visits and consultations with young mothers under the age of 22 that are having their first child. From the autumn of 2020-2022, 471 parents and 211 babies have received regular support.

Zdravka’s professional development does not stop there – she has now been selected to receive a stipend through TSA’s Scholarship Program for Roma Home Visitors, Nurses, and Midwives. Currently, TSA is supporting 30 women in their first and second year of study. Participants also receive support to prepare for and apply to the university.





**“I can be
anything
I want to be!”**



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