



**2024**

**TRUST FOR SOCIAL  
ACHIEVEMENT**

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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, more than 70% of whom live at risk of poverty and nearly 60% are 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.

In the last 11 years TSA has partnered with over 100 nongovernmental organizations, in order to help over 350 000 people from poor and disadvantaged communities in more than 700 locations throughout 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

150

ACTIVE PROJECTS

42

GRANTEES

50,000

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

USD 3,760,000

TOTAL PROJECT FUNDING

17

DONORS

# Improve a child's performance using just a textbook and card

Can a child improve their performance significantly with a small but essential measure that costs just a few dozen leva?



Yes, it is possible and proven through the Equal Chance program, initiated by the Trust for Social Achievement and implemented by 10 NGO partners across the country. One such partner, the Amalipe Center, supported seventy-six youth, whose average success increased by twenty points - from 4.48 to 4.63. And by the end of the year, that success had increased to 4.76. Of the students, eleven achieved straight-As. Fifteen made it through the year without a single unexcused absence.

**The program began in 2011. Participating students come from poor families, live in villages and small towns, and attend secondary and vocational schools in major cities. In addition to providing bus cards and textbooks, the Amalipe Center also engages students in youth volunteer activities, creating additional interest in school life.**

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villages and small towns, and attend secondary and vocational schools in major cities. In addition to providing bus cards and textbooks, the Amalipe Center also engages students in youth volunteer activities, creating additional interest in school life.

Students are required to attend school regularly, maintain a minimum GPA of 4, and participate in extracurricular activities.

The first graduating class (21) supported by Amalipe are now completing their secondary education. Some have applied and been accepted to institutes of higher education. Successful examples include Aksenia Rankova, who will continue her education in "Preschool Pedagogy" at Shumen University Episcopal Konstantin Preslavski and Sinan Kadir, who is studying Special Education. Virginia Atanasova has also been accepted and will continue her education at the Medical University of Varna, as well as Slavka Andreeva, who will receive her higher education at Sofia University St. Kliment

Ohridski. All four young people have been studying in Shumen.

Kiril Milushev from the village of Karadjovo, who has always excelled academically, continues to develop. He will acquire new knowledge in the field of Business Information Technologies at the University of Plovdiv. Also in Plovdiv, but in a completely different direction, Ziumbyula Lambova from Dalgopol will continue her education. In recent years, she has been one of the most active students and volunteers in the youth network of the Amalipe Center. Ziumbyula has always wanted to be helpful and assist others, and it is no coincidence that this autumn she will embark on the challenging path of medicine.

As in previous years, students participating in the Program are very active in both school and extracurricular activities.

**Students from vocational high schools participate in various competitions and always rank in prize-winning places.**

Some participants in the Program are chairpersons or members of the student councils in their schools and organize numerous campaigns to motivate their fellow students to be active and improve their environment. Many of them are also part of youth groups for civic participation and tolerance within the “Intercultural Academy for Civic Participation and Tolerance” project. In the spring of 2023, they organized and conducted numerous civic campaigns, peer training sessions, and pre-election debates. One student Sinan Kadir even hosted this year’s children’s festival “Open Heart.”



**The successes of the program encouraged the Amalipe team, and for this reason, they conducted twelve school visits to present the program nationwide**

The youth also visited vocational schools in the same municipality or nearby towns,

where they learned about the professions they could pursue, even having the opportunity to try some of the professional equipment in the respective schools where they would be trained in the future.

The assistance the children receive is highly appreciated. Most of them share that without textbooks or transportation cards, they would not have been able to complete their education.

However, at Amalipe, they know that without the efforts made by the children, these achievements would not have been possible. Therefore, we are proud of everyone and wish them new successes!



# Lukovitsa no longer weeps, but smiles!

The legend of the Lukovitsa neighborhood tells the story of a thief who stole a poor man's bag. When he opened it, he cried because inside there were only onions and dry bread.



Centuries after the birth of this legend, the local people have more reasons to smile, because now people will be able to live in their own, regulated houses.

**It all started in 2015 when the Trust for Social Achievement bought a plot of agricultural land with an area of 31,000 square meters from the Municipality of Peshtera. The goal was to support the community so that they could build new and legal homes for their families.**

After the adoption of the detailed development plan,

which provides for sixty-five individual plots for about 325 residents, thirty-two families have already purchased plots for the construction of legal housing, seven have received design visas, three have construction permits, and two families have laid the foundations of their future legal homes.

More than half of the Roma population in Bulgaria live in informal settlements. People want to live in legal housing, but the lack of a development plan for their neighborhoods and general, low awareness of this process prevents them from obtaining the necessary documents.

**The Trust for Social Achievement provides an opportunity for vulnerable groups from the Roma community, who do not own property and are homeless, or have large families living in illegal structures and poor living conditions: to apply for the purchase of plots in the Lukovitsa quarter.**

Over the years, the municipality of Peshtera and the Trust for Social Achievement have made efforts to develop the infrastructure of the new part of the Lukovitsa



neighborhood. In 2022, with funds from the national budget, the municipality completely renovated the road leading to the quarter.

**At the end of September 2023, the Trust for Social Achievement started the construction of a water supply and sewage system, which is expected to be completed by February 2024.**

According to the development plan, a site for a transformer substation has been designated, and the local electricity distribution company has undertaken to build it this year. The budget of the municipality of Peshtera for 2024 includes funds for the construction of neighborhood streets, sidewalks, and street lighting. In this way, legal construction is carried out in the new part of the Lukovitsa



quarter, in accordance with the regulatory framework of the Spatial Development Act. Local residents are becoming landowners and are building legal homes. Thus, they will have security for their homes, with the necessary infrastructure - electricity, water, sewage, streets, and street lighting. They will

contribute to the municipal budget by paying taxes, local fees, and utilities. They will have an address registration, which will allow them to obtain an ID card, to obtain an ID card, which is necessary for health, education, and social services.



# Nothing is Impossible!



**“I love to say that everyone’s life is a story waiting to be told.”**

When I was a child, they used to say I was half a person. At the age of five, I suffered a severe accident - I was hit by a car and had to recover for a long time afterwards. In the hospital, my broken limbs were put in casts, and my ruptured spleen, caused by the impact of the car, was removed. But during life-saving transfusions, I contracted Hepatitis C and developed anemia. The dedication and incredible efforts of my parents contributed to my return to a full life.

However, fate had other obstacles prepared for me. At my birth, my spine was

broken, and I underwent five surgeries. Tumors were also discovered in my breasts. The treatment was costly, and my family’s resources were not enough. Because of this, I had to interrupt my education after

**Today, however, I am on the verge of my final year of university study.**

completing high school.

My name is Galya Borisova, I am thirty-four years old, and I come from the Danube town of Kozloduy. I lived there until the age of twenty-six, where my dreams were born,

surrounded by many friends. My mother and father worked abroad to support my brother and me financially and to provide for our education until we reached adulthood. At the age of sixteen, I met my husband, but for a long time, we did not have children. On our wedding day, we were given a Chinese paper lantern on which I wrote “BABY” and released it into the sky to reach God, to grant me childbirth, as I wanted it so much and cried every day. After seven years of unsuccessful attempts with my husband, we decided to adopt. On the day we went to investigate what documents we needed to complete - it coincided with my birthday, and then I found out I was pregnant.

Our joy at this miracle was indescribable.

After the birth of our son, we moved into our own home, which my husband had been tirelessly working on for years, at the nearby village of Harlets near Kozloduy. Despite his hard work, our resources were not sufficient to support our now larger family, and





the three of us moved to Italy. Three years later, my husband's sister passed away, and we decided to return to Bulgaria to help raise her children. We enrolled our son Rumen in the kindergarten in Harlets, and soon after, its director offered me a job as a teacher. She introduced me to the opportunity to enroll in "Pedagogy" at the branch of the Veliko Tarnovo University in Vratsa, with financial support from the Trust for Social Achievement. I accepted with great joy.

**I started working first as an assistant teacher, and for the past three years, I have been a teacher. This is my profession! In October 2022, I will be a fourth-year student, and I am looking forward to graduating.**

Thanks to Spaska Mihaylova from the Association "New Road" and the Trust for Social Achievement, who made it possible for me to enroll in the university, I am moving forward and am happy to be able to work in what I have dreamed of and to have a financial contribution to my family's well-being. Young Roma Teachers has been an initiative of the Trust for Social Achievement since 2017. It has supported sixty young people who have become students, with ten already graduated and successfully working in kindergartens across the country. Over 80% of YRT participants who have graduated are working in their field, compared to the national average of only 60% of pedagogy students who pursue employment in their field of study.

**Being from the Roma community did not prevent me from developing.**

No one has ever come to the kindergarten and doubted my professional qualities. There are not many Roma children in our institution - most of those who live in the village do not attend kindergarten. We have had many conversations with the parents of these children in an attempt to include them in the educational process. Most of them are afraid of illnesses, and most often they do not have the financial means to buy the necessary clothes and shoes to send their children to us.

I understand what it is like because I have often faced difficulties myself. Despite the difficulties in our community, I still believe that most Roma children are already integrated.

These are also my observations from the training courses organized by the Trust for Social Achievement. At these meetings, everyone shares their accumulated experience in working with children and their families. Useful topics are discussed, and from these

discussions, I am convinced that most Roma people want to be full members of Bulgarian society.



I love to say that everyone's life is a story waiting to be told. Rarely do we have the chance to share it with a wide audience, and I am glad to have the opportunity to do so. I wish to send my message to all those who are reading my words now - do not let anything break you. Today, I am a whole and happy person because I believed in myself and succeeded in realizing my dream profession.



# Every baby is priceless: a first step towards a big dream



Всяко бебе е БЕЗценно!

In Bulgaria, around 6,500 premature babies are born each year.

**“Every Baby is Priceless”** marks the first major step for a network of civil society organizations called **“We Care, From 0 to 3”**. This success has inspired the network to undertake other bold initiatives to achieve systemic change in policies that care for the most vulnerable children and families. The network was initiated in Bulgaria by a team from the Trust for Social Achievement, with the support of partners, such as the Open Society Foundation and the Porticus Foundation, Amsterdam.

On January 1, 2023, the good news was announced that all uninsured pregnant women in Bulgaria will be given access to four check-ups, an expanded package of laboratory tests, and up to two hospitalizations during pregnancy. This happened with the adoption of changes in Regulation 26, which expanded the opportunities for examinations and tests for uninsured pregnant women.

Nearly 12 months later, we rewind to see what led to

the specific change in the regulatory framework, where the efforts of the Trust for Social Achievement began, and why it is so important to ensure effective monitoring of every woman’s pregnancy in Bulgaria.

Data shows that every year about 7,000 women in Bulgaria give birth without their pregnancy being monitored by a specialist doctor. This lack of medical care poses numerous risks for both the baby and the mother, and doctors are forced to deal with unknown risks.

In Bulgaria, around 6,500 premature babies are born each year. If only 26 of them can avoid preventable complications, it will cover the investment for monitoring all pregnancies, as shown in the report **“The Cost of Indifference.”**

One-third of severe illnesses in newborns are preventable with regular check-ups of pregnant women. Another key finding from the report is that the cost of hospital care for a newborn with severe complications is 142 times

higher than the value of care for a healthy baby.

## What do specialists say:

**“Some disabilities are preventable, especially if a problem related to the mother’s health is identified early enough, and she receives the nutritional supplements, vitamins, and medications associated with that problem. This helps the child to be born alive and healthy at the right time”, as reported by Maria Evgenieva, a midwife and clinical leader at the Trust for Social Achievement.**

**“In conditions of a demographic crisis, every baby is priceless, and every pregnancy should be monitored. More check-ups for uninsured individuals or providing similar opportunities available to insured women will provide much better prevention, screening, and early diagnosis of**

all preventable diseases during pregnancy. This will reduce the risk of complications, premature births, and perinatal consequences,” says Dr. Tanya Andreeva, a pediatrician.

## What’s next?

Activities under the project also include training of mediators, a broad information campaign, meetings with representatives of institutions, and a survey among doctors to establish their attitudes.

Although the changes in Regulation 26 are now a fact, its implementation is limited due to lack of awareness, administrative difficulties, reluctance, and discriminatory attitudes. Therefore, the information campaign must continue to persuade society, institutions,

and doctors of the need for all pregnant women to be under medical supervision and to take concrete steps to implement the regulation.

It is of utmost importance to reach all women in difficult socio-economic situations so that they are aware of the need and opportunities for monitoring.

Further efforts of the “We Care, From 0-3” network are aimed at improving policies that provide access to free medicines for all children up to 3 years old and accessible options for proper nutrition for vulnerable families.



# Support that Changes Lives

One notable achievement from the program in Bulgaria is that mothers participating in the program extended their breastfeeding by nearly a month longer than mothers in the comparison group.



In the spring of 2022, a research team from the University of Utrecht, led by Professor Joost de Laat, in collaboration with Alpha Research, undertook a study on the outcomes achieved by the specialized home visiting service Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) in Bulgaria. Implemented and tested since 2016 in Bulgaria, the service has provided support to over 420 young families in Sofia and Plovdiv through home visiting nurses.

Between May and July 2022, a trained team from Alpha Research surveyed over 750 mothers - some who had already completed the home visiting service, others currently participating, and a third group who had not participated in the NFP.

**The results from the children and mothers who underwent the service in Bulgaria indicate that specialized support has the potential to change lives - many of the outcomes are nearly equal and, in some**

**aspects, even surpass those of mothers and children from the general population.**

Mothers who received the home visiting service have broader knowledge about pregnancy, both concerning themselves and their babies. The study indicates lower levels of depression and feelings of social isolation among mothers, as well as significantly increased knowledge about contraception and family planning.

Why does breastfeeding matter? It can help to reduce the risks for children in developing heart problems, diabetes, osteoporosis, and others; as well as decreased risks of breast and ovarian cancer for mothers.

**Additionally, the results demonstrate increased maternal attention to their children's development.**

Responsible parenting - a primary theme in

conversations between home visiting nurses and mothers - is crucial for providing a supportive environment for the development and learning of the youngest.

**Comparing the two groups of mothers in vulnerable situations, those who participated in the service are more likely to read books to their children (23%), tell stories (17%), count and draw with them (16%), and play with toys (8%).**



Activities with children during the first two years are crucial for their development - they enhance their communication and socio-emotional skills, lay the foundation for coping with problems and stressful situations, and develop resilience, which are essential for children's school readiness and have implications throughout their lives.

It is precisely in these areas that some of the most significant achievements of the service lie.

**Its impact on children's development is notable, with children participating in the NFP not only showing significantly higher ASQ scores, but effectively eliminating the gap with children from the general population, whose scores were nearly the same.**

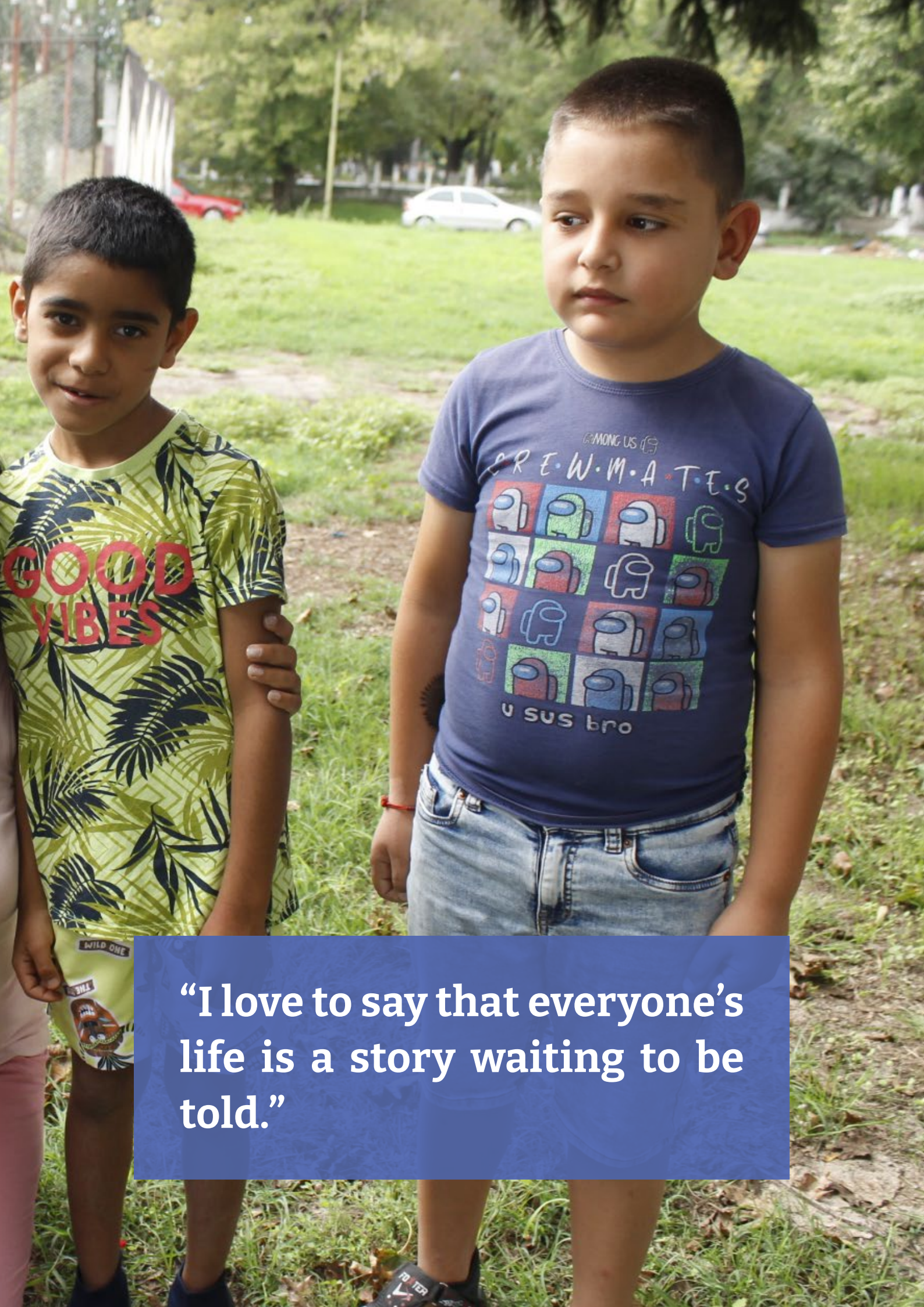
**In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the approximately 60 visits made by home visiting nurses to each family have an exceptionally positive influence on child health and development.**



For the team at the Trust for Social Achievement the study, besides being a recognition of our long-standing efforts, is also a valuable advocacy tool: every year, over 4000 mothers under the age of 20 give birth to their first child in Bulgaria - all of them should be able to benefit from support that has been proven to help them and their children.







**“I love to say that everyone’s life is a story waiting to be told.”**



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**TRUST  
FOR SOCIAL  
ACHIEVEMENT**

Sofia, 64 Patriarch Evtimiy Blvd., 1<sup>st</sup> floor

[info@tsa-bulgaria.org](mailto:info@tsa-bulgaria.org)

[www.socialachievement.org](http://www.socialachievement.org)