

One Heart Foundation After-School Enrichment Program for Children At-risk and Their Parents

(An Initiative to Prevent Child Abandonment, Child Marriage, and Early Pregnancy)

Description of Proposed Program

The *One Heart Bulgaria After-School Support & Enrichment Program* will be a community-based initiative designed to support underprivileged children at risk of abandonment. Operating on weekdays after school, the program provides a safe, nurturing environment where children receive an after-school snack, homework assistance, English lessons, and enrichment activities while their parents are at work. The purpose of this initiative is to 1.) reduce the risk of child abandonment, 2.) improve educational outcomes for children at-risk, 3.) strengthen underprivileged families, 4.) decrease the occurrence of child marriage and pregnancy, and 5.) support Bulgaria's commitment to ending child institutionalization in alignment with European Union directives.

Target Population

Children ages 6–12 from economically vulnerable families, particularly those identified by schools or social services as at risk due to poverty, neglect, or family instability.

Program Components

- **Nutritious Snack:** A daily healthy snack upon arrival to support child health and focus.
- **Homework Support:** Structured academic help to reinforce schoolwork and boost confidence.
- **English Lessons:** Foundational language instruction to enhance future opportunities.
- **Enrichment Activities:** Rotating sessions including crafts, games, simple sports, music, and creative play.
- **Mentorship & Guidance:** Staff and volunteers build consistent relationships with children to offer emotional support, model positive behavior, and encourage self-worth.
- **Safe Pickup Routine:** Children are picked up by 5:20 PM, supporting family structure and accountability.
- **Monthly Parenting Classes:** Required workshops on child development, discipline, communication, and stress management—empowering parents to create stable, loving homes.

Program Goals

- Prevent child abandonment through structured after-school support and active family engagement
- Improve academic performance, school retention, high school graduation rates, emotional well-being, and social development
- Reduce school dropout rates and decrease the incidence of child marriage and early pregnancy
- Equip parents with the knowledge and tools needed to build stable, supportive, and resilient family environments

Long-Term Vision

This program aligns with our mission to prevent child abandonment, child marriage, and early pregnancy by strengthening families, promoting deinstitutionalization, and addressing the root causes of generational poverty.

Conclusion

This program addresses urgent and interconnected challenges by providing both immediate support and long-term solutions for vulnerable children and their families. By creating a safe, structured environment during critical after-school hours and actively engaging parents through education and mentorship, the initiative targets the root causes of abandonment, child marriage, early pregnancy, and family instability.

Through this holistic approach, One Heart Bulgaria is not only meeting present needs, but also contributing to systemic change, helping children remain in family-based care, strengthening households, and breaking cycles of child marriage and poverty across generations. Ultimately, this program supports a future in which every child in Bulgaria has the opportunity to develop, succeed, and grow up in a safe, stable, and loving home.

Official Proposal

One Heart Bulgaria After-School Enrichment Program for Children At-risk and Their Parents

(An Initiative to Prevent Child Abandonment, Child Marriage, and Early Pregnancy)

Submitted by: One Heart Bulgaria

Full Summary

The One Heart Bulgaria After-School Program is a community-based initiative designed to support underprivileged children at risk of abandonment, neglect, institutionalization, school dropout, child marriage, and early pregnancy. Operating during after-school hours, the program provides a safe, structured, and nurturing environment where children receive academic support, nutritious meals, English language instruction, and enriching developmental activities.

By engaging children during critical after-school hours and strengthening family stability, the program addresses key risk factors that often contribute to school dropout, child marriage, early pregnancy, and poverty. In parallel, monthly parenting workshops equip parents with the knowledge and tools needed to build stable, healthy, and supportive family environments.

Program Goals

- Prevent child abandonment by providing consistent after-school care, support, and enrichment during vulnerable hours
- Improve academic performance, school engagement, and long-term educational attainment among school-aged children
- Reduce school dropout rates by reinforcing daily structure, academic support, and motivation to remain in school
- Decrease the incidence of child marriage and early pregnancy by helping children remain engaged in their education and connected to supportive environments
- Support children's social and emotional development through developmental activities
- Provide foundational English language education to expand future educational and career opportunities
- Offer mentorship and guidance through caring staff and volunteers who build consistent relationships, provide emotional support, model positive behavior, and encourage self-worth
- Strengthen families by providing parenting classes and resources to parents to foster stable and supportive home environments

Target Population

The program is intended for children ages 6 to 18 from economically disadvantaged families, particularly those identified by social workers, teachers, or community leaders as at-risk of abandonment, neglect, and child marriage due to:

- Parental absence (migration for work, incarceration, illness)
- Neglectful or unstable home environments
- Poverty or discrimination
- Cultural practices

Children in Bulgaria who do not complete their education, particularly girls from marginalized communities, are at significantly higher risk of early marriage and early pregnancy. In some instances, girls are married as young as 10 years old and even become pregnant as young as 10-11 years old.

When girls leave school without a clear path toward continued education or future employment, these outcomes become more likely, contributing to the continuation of generational poverty and limited life opportunities. By keeping children engaged in school, supporting their academic success, and expanding their sense of future possibility, this program directly addresses key factors that contribute to early dropout, child marriage, and early pregnancy.

While these risks are especially pronounced among Roma communities and refugees, the program is designed to serve all children in Bulgaria who are vulnerable to abandonment, institutionalization, and school dropout, regardless of background. This approach ensures inclusivity while addressing common underlying risk factors across populations.

Program Components

1. Daily Nutritional Support: Upon arrival, each child receives a nutritious lunch to support basic health and focus, particularly for children who may not receive consistent meals at home or at school.

2. Homework Assistance: Structured academic support helps children complete their daily homework, reinforcing classroom learning and boosting academic achievement and pursuits. Volunteers and staff provide one-on-one or small group tutoring, as needed.

3. English Language Lessons: Each day includes an age-appropriate English language class, helping children develop foundational vocabulary, comprehension, and communication skills—critical tools for educational and career advancement in a globalized world.

4. Mentorship & Guidance: Staff and volunteers build consistent relationships with children to offer emotional support, model positive behavior, and encourage self-worth.

5. Creative & Physical Enrichment: Throughout the month, children will participate in a variety of rotating enrichment activities and exercises. These activities promote creativity, teamwork, physical development, and emotional well-being.

6. Structured Pickup & Family Routine: Parents or guardians are required to pick up their children no later than 5:20 PM each day, reinforcing routine and accountability. Staff will communicate with families regularly to support consistent attendance and engagement.

7. Monthly Parenting Workshops: To support long-term family stability, one parenting class per month will be offered and required for all participating families. Topics include:

- Positive parenting practices
- Child development and emotional needs
- Healthy communication
- Conflict resolution
- Self-reliance
- Stress management and self-care workshops will be led by trained social workers, educators, or guest professionals.

Program Schedule & Location

- Located in a designated community center, school, or NGO space with classrooms and activity areas for 20-25 children. *This center must be donated by the municipality.*
- Monday–Friday, beginning after school until 5:20 PM

Expected Outcomes

By providing a structured and nurturing after-school environment supported by mentors, social workers, teachers, and volunteers, the program aims to achieve:

- A reduction in child abandonment among vulnerable children
- A reduction in child marriage
- A reduction in early pregnancy
- Improved academic performance and school engagement
- Enhanced emotional, social, and physical well-being
- Expanded career pathways for vulnerable and marginalized children
- Empowered parents with knowledge and tools to build stronger family relationships
- Strengthened community bonds and a replicable model for broader impact
- Support for Bulgaria's national efforts to end child institutionalization in alignment with European Union directives

Sustainability & Long-Term Vision

As funding permits, One Heart Bulgaria plans to replicate this program in multiple cities across Bulgaria where rates of child abandonment, institutionalization, school dropout, child marriage, early pregnancy, and maternal poverty remain critically high.

The One Heart Bulgaria After-School Enrichment Program is a preventive, holistic, and compassionate intervention designed to address the root causes of abandonment, early school

dropout, child marriage, early pregnancy and generational poverty. By providing safe, structured, and supportive environments for children and adolescents to learn, grow, and thrive, while simultaneously empowering families through education, mentorship, and engagement, the program not only meets urgent needs, but also lays the foundation for long-term family stability and sustainable community transformation.

Budget

One Heart Bulgaria After-School Program

1. Facility Rent

Provided by the local municipality
\$0

2. Furnishings and Educational Equipment (One-Time Cost)

Homework and learning stations will be established, including tables, desks, chairs, computers, a printer, and a classroom board. These will serve both students and staff, supporting academic activities, digital learning, and program operations.

Suitable for a group of 20 students.
\$4,000

3. Staff Salaries (Monthly)

Social Workers – 2 people

Working hours: 3 hours per day, 5 days per week (approximately 60 hours per month)

- Social Worker 1: **\$330 – \$460/month**
- Social Worker 2: **\$330 – \$460/month**

Total (both): \$660 – \$920/month

English Teacher – 1 person

Working hours: 3 hours per day, 5 days per week (approximately 60 hours per month)

- English Teacher: **\$495 – \$660/month**

4. Food (Light Meal) – Monthly

For 20 children:

- Average: \$1.65 per child per day
- 20 school days/month

Total: \$660/month

5. Activity Materials – Monthly

Includes art supplies, games, sports equipment, holiday activities, and contingencies

\$140/month

6. Utilities – Monthly

Electricity, water, heating or cooling, internet

\$220/month

7. Administrative Costs – Monthly

Printed materials, transportation, phone, software, accounting

\$110/month

8. Program Operations and Oversight – Monthly

Local program management and daily oversight, coordination with municipal partners, program implementation, monitoring and reporting, and donor communication

\$700/month

9. Program Flexibility and Expansion Fund

Allows the program to respond to increased need, support additional children, children in crisis, address unforeseen expenses, and maintain consistent program quality.

\$5,000

Summary Monthly Budget (USD)

| Expense | Amount (USD) |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Program Operations and Oversight | \$700 |
| Social Worker Salaries | \$660 – \$920 |
| English Teacher Salary | \$495 – \$660 |
| Food | \$660 |
| Activity Materials | \$140 |
| Utilities | \$220 |
| Administrative Costs | \$110 |
| Total Monthly | \$2,985 – \$3,410 |

Annual Budget

- **Low estimate:** \$35,820
 - **High estimate:** \$40,920
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Total First-Year Budget (Including Setup and Expansion Fund)

| Category | Amount (USD) |
|--|----------------------------|
| One-Time Equipment | \$4,000 |
| Annual Operating Costs | \$35,820 – \$40,920 |
| Program Flexibility and Expansion Fund | \$5,000 |
| Total First Year | \$44,820 – \$49,920 |

