

**THE HOUSE OF
OPPORTUNITY
PROGRAMME
in Albania**





INTRODUCTION

Young people leaving state care are highly vulnerable to falling victims to poverty, crime, prostitution, abuse or trafficking. When this happens the consequences are often devastating for the individuals and have a far reaching and damaging impact on the wider community. A2B Albania, in cooperation with the local government in Elbasan, wants to address this problem by setting up a House of Opportunity in partnership with the Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion (FSCI). Tried and tested, the House of Opportunity Programme, first developed by the FSCI in Bulgaria in 2007, has proved to be an effective response, transforming the lives of young people just at the point when they were most at risk.

A2B Albania is in an excellent position to lead this new venture due to their experience in running other successful projects combatting poverty and exclusion in Elbasan. But A2B urgently needs your help if it is to continue this much-needed support to young vulnerable care leavers.

Please read on to find out about the desperate situation of care leavers in Albania, the progress of the House of Opportunity Elbasan project so far, its costs and how you can help.



1. THE SITUATION FOR CARE LEAVERS IN ALBANIA

In Albania care leavers suffer a lot of discrimination and face a host of disadvantages. When these young people have to strike out on their own at eighteen, most of them have nothing - no home, no money, no family, no job and no idea of life outside an institution.

They are therefore at high risk of homelessness, involvement in criminal activities, drug abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking. There is insufficient government provision for care leavers and only very limited non-governmental care provision.

2. THE HOUSE OF OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMME AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

The House of Opportunity Programme (HOP), first developed by the Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion (FSCI) in Bulgaria in 2007, aims to transform the lives of vulnerable young people, particularly those who have grown up in state or foster care and who have nowhere to go when they have to leave. Each House in the programme provides six care leavers with up to two years of life skills training, employment opportunities and accommodation in a family-style, small group home. They have the support of live in house parents and help from other professionals in social work and psychology.

FSCI's team of qualified professionals has experience and knowledge of how to set up and run a residential training programme in different Balkan countries to equip vulnerable

young people with the tools they need to live successful, independent lives free from crime and prostitution. The HOP has a very significant impact on the lives of its participants. For some of them this is literally a new beginning. Their lives are turned around completely. Before entering the HOP they lived in dysfunctional families facing violence, alcoholism, poverty, hopelessness, or in orphanages, on their own without the support of an adult who would show them the right path and prepare them for the real world and an independent life. After being in the House for a while they start feeling safe, accepted and loved. They have a place where they belong; they are free to make mistakes and still experience that they are accepted.

Two young people summarise what joining the programme has meant to them:

“This programme supported me when nobody else did. I had to leave the orphanage without a certificate, family or a place to stay. They helped me to concentrate on finishing my education; I got a passport and for the first time I went abroad. Now, I found some relatives and my heritage. I will finish my education, find a job and start a new life. Without support at the right time - I was very close to committing suicide.”

“I spent my life with some members of family but without parents, in poverty, without adequate support. I missed out on my childhood and on one year of education. Right now I am successful at the University and in sport. I feel safe and protected in the HOP, and I am grateful for everything that I have in this programme.”

We've been able to tell the story of the Houses of Opportunity and the young people on national and local TV. This gives the team the opportunity to raise awareness about the project and the lack of provision nationally for children growing up in care when they turn eighteen. Reporters often mention that they are touched by the stories of the young people and impressed by the way the staff team works with and teaches the young people.



“House of Opportunity is very meaningful - I have experienced it.”

Maria*, HOP Ruse

*Name changed

3. HOUSE OF OPPORTUNITY IN ELBASAN - REQUEST FOR FUNDING

A2B has opened the first House of Opportunity in Elbasan in May 2017 with some initial help and support from The Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion (FSCI) and in partnership with the local municipality which has donated free use of a building five years. Elbasan's child protection service is eager for the House of Opportunity to open its doors, but Albania is a poor country and this can't be done without external funding.

The A2B team has a vision to see a network of Houses established right across Albania, with the next location being Shkoder.

The cost for the House of Opportunity Elbasan (6 residents):

The yearly cost is €24,000
The monthly cost is: €2,000
A place per month is: €334

Will you consider supporting the House of Opportunity Elbasan?

If you are part of a church or a teacher, is your church or school interested in offering financial support and friendship to the young people in the House ("twinning")?

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like any further information.

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Donate online:
www.fscinet.org/donate
Cheques: "FSCI (UK)"

Direct donations via bank transfer - please specify "HOP Elbasan"

Acc. Name: FSCI (UK)

Bank Address: Santander 53 Silver Street, Salisbury, SP1 2NG

Sort Code: 09 01 29

Acc. No: 11340290

INTRODUCTION TO A2B ALBANIA

A2B is a Christian development agency working to restore hope amongst the poorest and most vulnerable people in Albania – one of Europe's poorest countries. It brings hope, compassion and practical support to poor communities.

A2B works together with its supporters to help people who are in serious need. It works in three major areas:

1) Day Centre

The Buka e Jetes day centre provides food, advice and community to vulnerable people in Elbasan. Each day around 50 children and elderly people come together to eat, enjoy valuable social interaction and know that someone cares for them.

2) Family Link

A2B link families in the UK with families in need in Albania. The programme provides focused sponsorship for families and allows the donor family to know exactly who they are supporting.

3) Kindergarten Programmes
Social exclusion, a missed education and trafficking are serious risks to vulnerable children at the margins of Albanian society. Our kindergarten programmes exist to protect these at-risk children whilst providing opportunities for a brighter future.

A2B currently run 3 kindergarten programmes: "Another Life – Elbasan", "Another Life – Peqin" (in cooperation with a pastor and the local church) and "Hope for the Future". In total over 50 children are enrolled in our programmes.

www.a2balbania.org

Licensed Albania NGO LN-5735-10-2012



INTRODUCTION TO FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AND INCLUSION (FSCI)

The Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion (FSCI) was founded in 2008 to help revive hope and restore dignity to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised individuals and communities in Bulgaria.

Besides the House of Opportunity Programme, FSCI runs two other programmes:

Social Enterprise Programme
- Practical projects that give young adults social and employment skills such as the HOPE Restaurant.

The Early Years Education Programme provides a vital pathway into education for Roma children.

The dangers that young people face when leaving state care at eighteen, the high school drop-out rate and social isolation of Roma children and the challenges vulnerable young people face when looking for a job are not just limited to Bulgaria.

That is why FSCI is offering its programmes to NGOs throughout the Balkans region inviting them to join its FSCI Development Programme. So far eight partners from Albania, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia have joined which includes the provision of networking opportunities, training, an HOP operating manual and support.

Currently FSCI and its partners operate 10 Houses of Opportunity in Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and Albania.

www.fscinet.org

Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion:
Reg. Bulgarian NGO 175633540

FSCI (UK): Reg. Charity in England & Wales
1170914



**Foundation for Social
Change and Inclusion**

The logo features the acronym 'FSCI' in a large, bold, white font with a blue outline. Below it, the full name 'Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion' is written in a smaller, bold, blue font. The background of the logo area is a light blue gradient.