



RISE TOGETHER

Trauma Healing for Romania's Orphans



Romania 1989

Following decades of harsh oppression and one of the most bloodstained revolutions behind the Iron Curtain, Romania emerged to a potentially bright future as a free nation. This future was immediately darkened by revelations of neglect, abandonment, and abuse of the nation's seemingly countless orphans.

During the brutal dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaucescu, Romania's infamous communist leader, experts estimate that over 500,000 children were abandoned in state institutions.

These institutions became infamous themselves for the unprecedented levels of abuse and neglect that took place within their walls.

19,000,000

Current Romanian Population

Roughly the size of Oregon

Geographical size of Romania

Former Roman Province

The Romanian language is one of the 5 "Romance" languages. Romania was called "Dacia" while under Roman rule.

Present Day

A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS AMONG ORPHANS

The plight of Romanian orphans has improved since 1989, however, due to a lack of resources and a fatalistic mindset, Romania's state orphans rarely receive the care they need. Nearly all of these children have suffered trauma at the hands of family members, only to suffer additional trauma once relegated to a system marked by a lack of dignity toward the "unwanted". Most have endured emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, and all have suffered from a severe sense of neglect.



Ongoing experiences of neglect combine to create an internal narrative that says, "I don't matter...to anyone."

This level of trauma has a deep and lasting impact on a child's ability to function in society. Sensory, social-adjustment, and trust/detachment issues all tend to create crippling mental health concerns for this vulnerable population, making it nearly impossible for them to transition into a healthy and confident adulthood.

43,000+

Orphans still in state custody

1 to 2

IQ points lost for every month a child spends institutionalized

7.5 years

Average number of years a child spends in a state institution

Only 1 in 40

Youth legally employed within 1 year of leaving a state institution

1:100

Ratio of government psychologists to institutionalized children

10x

The increased risk of being trafficked as a female orphan

“When a child feels truly safe, doors swing open to positive change.”

“The goal is to see the precious child that exists beneath the survival strategies, and to let them know that we see them.”

“Children need to know that they are precious, in the sunshine and in the rain.”

DR. KARYN PURVIS



ISTVAN MUNTEAN
Founder and President

ALINA MUNTEAN
Family psychotherapist, TBRI Practitioner

Advocates For Healing

It's hard to imagine how two people could be more perfectly prepared to do such important work together.

ISTVAN

Abandoned at the age of three, Istvan was "raised" with 100's of other orphans in a state institution. God redeemed his life, physically and spiritually, through the work of a caring missionary. Through discipleship, counseling, and support, Istvan began the long journey of healing from the effects of his childhood trauma. As a result, God placed a burden and a calling in his heart to help other orphans. Through his work with orphans, he met, fell in love with, and married Alina.

ALINA

As a teenager, God gave Alina a burden for the orphan community and she began volunteering and serving with various organizations. This passion led her to obtain a degree in psychology and psychotherapy with an emphasis on trauma. She received additional certification from the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development, and further training in the Feuerstein Method of Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM). Alina is a true professional operating at the top of her field.

Together, Istvan and Alina have been working with institutionalized children for over 15 years. In 2018, they founded RISE TOGETHER. God intertwined their lives and callings in a way that they could have never planned or orchestrated themselves.

RISING TOGETHER

Located in the North-Central city of Targu Mures, Romania, the mission and work of RISE TOGETHER is to empower vulnerable children by helping them rise as strong followers of Christ, heal from trauma, and have a lasting and positive impact on society as adults.

Helping children heal requires spiritual discernment, a commitment to the cause, and the grace to meet and engage with them right where they are.



ONGOING HEALING

Rise Together currently cares for 35-40 children per week on a rotating basis, divided by age, trauma history, and needs. They work with children who are still in state institutions, as well as those who have already been released and are struggling to bridge the gap from a lifetime of institutionalization to the real world. This subset of aged-out orphans has no safety net, no family support, few true friendships, and a limited vision of what independent emotional, spiritual, mental, and financial life might look like. Rise Together helps them find that bridge in Christ through the healing process, while giving them the practical tools they need to succeed.

INTENSIVE SUMMER THERAPY

In addition to their weekly activities, Rise Together takes large groups of orphans away each year for therapeutic summer camps where professional counselors and volunteer mentors use a mixture of strategic play, the outdoor elements, emotional bonding, and a high staff-to-child ratio to make great strides in the healing process.

TRAINING LEADERS

Throughout the year, Rise Together provides additional training, case discussion, role-play, and technique development for staff and volunteers. There is a significant emphasis on Bible Study, discipleship, and doing life together, as the leaders and teams learn to care for each other.

ADVOCACY

Rise Together collaborates with other leaders, NGOs, churches, and state institutions to provide guidance and support to prospective adoptive parents. They also belong to a national advocacy group called Romania Without Orphans.



A PERMANENT HOME *For Expanded Healing*

Rise Together's work often takes place inside state institutions, as well as in the homes of staff and volunteers. These unreliable environments create a disjointed experience, inhibit long-term strategic work, hinder staff availability, and limit the number of children that they can care for.

A permanent home for their work and mission is desperately needed.

Healthbridge Global is partnering with Rise Together to build a permanent home for the work they do with these precious children. Having a facility will allow Rise Together to:

1. Increase the number of children they are caring for from 35 to 100 per week within 3 years

2. Curate an environment that is more conducive to healing

3. Freely share and incorporate the gospel into their work

4. Provide higher quality training and skill development for additional staff and volunteers

5. Provide transitional living help for up to 6 young adults per year who have aged-out of the system

6. Expand their team of workers and create a model that can be replicated in other cities



Phase 1

**LAND PURCHASE AND
PROJECT PLANNING**



COMPLETED 2022

Phase 2

**PERMITTING AND
CONSTRUCTION APPROVAL**



COMPLETED
SUMMER 2023

Phase 3

**POUR FOUNDATION AND
BEGIN CONSTRUCTION**



COMPLETED
FALL 2023

Phase 4

ROUGH CONSTRUCTION

BEGAN WINTER 2023

Phase 5

FINISHING CONSTRUCTION

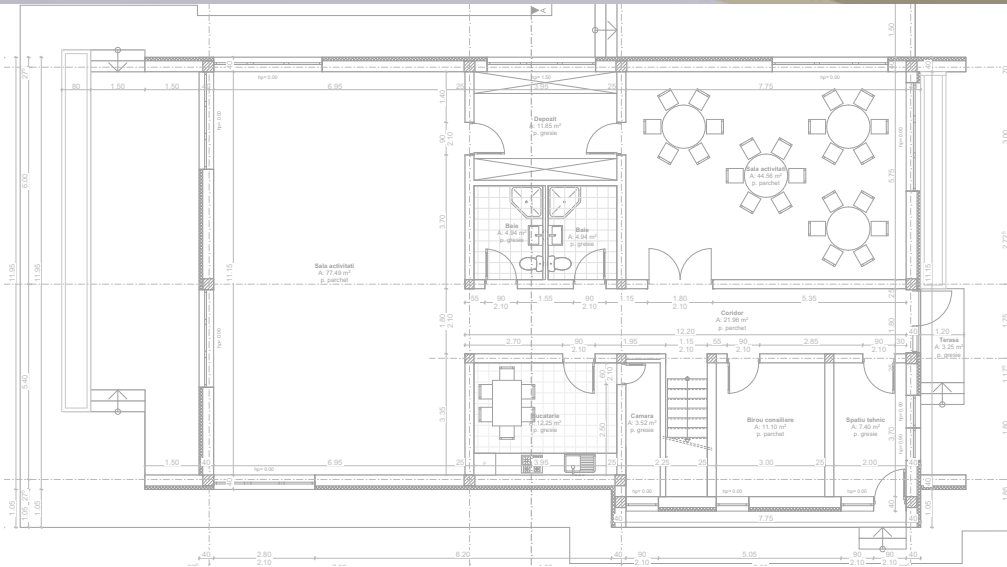
EXPECTED FALL 2024

Phase 6

EQUIPPING AND FINISHING

EXPECTED FALL/WINTER
2025

Total Project Budget **\$460,000**



PROJECT FAQ'S

What is Rise Together?

Rise Together is a Romanian Non-Profit Organization started by Istvan and Alina Muntean. Their mission is to bring professional mental health services and trauma healing to institutionalized orphans in Romania. While only officially incorporated in 2018, they have over 15 years of experience doing this important work. They have a local staff, volunteers, and a board of directors who serve within and oversee the organization.

What is Healthbridge Global's role in this project?

We have adopted this expanded vision and project as our own. We are the official US partner, advocating and consulting for the project's success. In addition, we raise capital from caring and like-hearted people in the US. This project aligns with our mission and has the full support of our board of directors.

Does Healthbridge provide operating support for Rise Together?

Rise Together has a well-formed plan to be financially self-sustaining within a year or two of opening the new facility. We've built some operating funding into the project budget, but will not need to feed the work in perpetuity. Rise Together has the capacity to maintain the work once the facility is open and operational.

Other questions?

Feel free to reach out. We'll answer any questions you may have.

info@healthbridgeglobal.org



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