

## CONCEPT NOTE

### **Project Title (proposed)**

**SOLE South Odesa: Expanding Self-Organised Learning Opportunities for Children and Youth in South-Western Odesa Oblast**

### **Project Location**

Izmail, Bolhrad, Reni, Tatarbunary, and Kiliia communities, Odesa Oblast, Ukraine.

### **Proposed Project Duration**

24 months

### **Background and Problem Statement**

Children and young people living in south-western Odesa Oblast continue to face limited access to innovative educational opportunities, extracurricular activities, and safe spaces for personal development. Rural and small urban communities are particularly affected by shortages of qualified specialists, insufficient non-formal education services, and limited opportunities for youth participation and leadership development.

The existing SOLE Izmail initiative has demonstrated that the Self-Organised Learning Environment (SOLE) methodology can effectively enhance children's motivation to learn, strengthen soft skills, and create supportive learning communities through volunteer engagement and partnerships with educational institutions. However, the current model primarily benefits children in Izmail and neighbouring communities, leaving significant unmet needs across the wider region.

### **Project Goal**

To improve access to innovative non-formal education and meaningful youth participation opportunities for children and young people in south-western Odesa Oblast through the expansion and localisation of the SOLE model.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. Expand the SOLE methodology to additional communities through the establishment of local implementation hubs.
2. Strengthen the capacity of educators, university students, and volunteers to deliver child-centred non-formal education activities.
3. Foster youth leadership and civic engagement through an enhanced school microgrant programme.
4. Develop a sustainable regional network of practitioners capable of continuing SOLE activities beyond direct project support.

### **Project Description**

The proposed intervention builds upon the proven SOLE Izmail model by replicating its core components while introducing a regional expansion approach.

SOLE Izmail will continue functioning as the central coordination and expertise hub. While maintaining a smaller portfolio of direct educational activities for children, its primary role will shift towards training, mentoring, quality assurance, and methodological support.

Four additional community-based "mini-SOLE" hubs will be established in Bolhrad, Reni, Tatarbunary, and Kiliia. These hubs will operate within existing educational institutions, thereby reducing infrastructure costs and promoting local ownership and sustainability.

Volunteer teams will be formed from local teachers and students enrolled in pedagogical and social work programmes at Izmail State University of Humanities, Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi Pedagogical College, and teacher-training universities in Odesa. Following specialised training in the SOLE methodology, participating students will be able to undertake supervised teaching placements through the project, gaining practical experience prior to graduation.

The existing school microgrant programme will be expanded in two important ways. First, eligibility will be extended to vocational and professional pre-higher education institutions, recognising that first- and second-year students correspond to Grades 10–11 and face similar developmental needs. Second, the programme will evolve from a grant competition into a structured youth capacity-building process. Selected student teams will receive training in project design, grant writing, budgeting, and project management before developing their own project proposals. The strongest initiatives will receive financial support and mentoring during implementation.

## **Target Groups**

### **Direct beneficiaries:**

- Children and adolescents aged 10–18 participating in SOLE activities;
- Secondary school students;
- Students of vocational and professional pre-higher education institutions;
- University students enrolled in pedagogical and social work programmes;
- Teachers and educational professionals from participating communities.

### **Indirect beneficiaries:**

- Families of participating children and youth;
- Educational institutions involved in the project;
- Local communities benefiting from youth-led initiatives.

## **Expected Results**

- Four community-based mini-SOLE hubs established and operational.
- Increased access to quality non-formal education opportunities for children and adolescents across south-western Odesa Oblast.
- A regional network of educators, university students, and volunteers trained in the SOLE methodology created and actively engaged.
- Future teachers and social workers equipped with practical experience through supervised placements.

- Educational institutions strengthened in their capacity to design and implement local initiatives.
- Youth equipped with practical skills in project design, leadership, and project management.
- Student-led initiatives implemented through the enhanced microgrant programme.

### **Sustainability and Exit Strategy**

The project prioritises sustainability through capacity transfer and institutional embedding. By integrating activities into existing educational institutions and equipping local educators and university students with the necessary competencies, communities will be able to continue implementing SOLE activities independently.

Partnerships with universities and colleges will ensure a continuous pipeline of trained volunteers and young professionals. The project methodology, training materials, and mentoring systems developed through the intervention will remain available to participating institutions beyond the project period.

### **Added Value**

- Replication of a tested and evidence-based educational model.
- Expansion of services to underserved communities.
- Strengthening of local ownership through partnerships with existing institutions.
- Development of future educators and social workers through experiential learning.
- Integration of youth empowerment with practical skills development.
- Increased resilience and self-reliance of educational institutions and local communities.

### **Risks and Mitigation Measures**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation Measure</b>
Increased coordination complexity across multiple locations	Establishment of a clear management structure and regular coordination mechanisms
Insufficient human resources	Development of volunteer pools and partnerships with higher education institutions
Higher transportation and operational costs	Use of existing infrastructure and careful logistical planning
Variations in implementation quality between hubs	Continuous mentoring, supervision, and quality assurance by the central SOLE Izmail team
Volunteer turnover	Ongoing recruitment and training of new student cohorts

### **Estimated budget**

<b>Proposed Budget Line</b>	<b>Estimated Amount (EUR)</b>

Project Personnel (Project Manager – 1.0 FTE; Accountant – 0.5 FTE; 2 Senior Social Workers – 1.0 FTE in total; 6 Social Educators – 0.5 FTE each)	179,000
Renovation of the existing SOLE Izmail hub	9,000
Renovation of premises for 4 mini-SOLE hubs	$9,600 \times 4 =$ 38,400
Additional equipment for SOLE Izmail (5 laptops, interactive panel, EcoFlow power station)	10,000
Equipment for 4 mini-SOLE hubs	$14,500 \times 4 =$ 58,000
Furniture for 4 mini-SOLE hubs	$5,000 \times 4 =$ 20,000
Children's Non-Formal Education Programme (regular SOLE sessions in 5 hubs; language, creative and thematic activities; consumables; stationery; printing; materials for experiments; board games and educational kits; drinking water and light refreshments; local children's events)	$5 \text{ hubs} \times 24$ $\text{months} \times \text{EUR}$ $350 = 42,000$
Capacity Building of Educators and Volunteers (introductory SOLE trainings; training for new facilitators; supervision meetings; methodological workshops; printing of training materials; certification; participants' meals and refreshments)	8 trainings + supervision = 20,000
Student Practice and Future Professionals Programme (training of pedagogy and social work students; practical sessions; supervision of placements; meals during training activities; methodological packages; inter-university meetings)	6,000
Youth Leadership and Project Design Programme (leadership trainings; project management; budgeting; grant writing; team building; mentoring sessions; preparation of project proposals)	10,000
Youth Microgrant Programme (6 youth microgrants)	12,000
Mentoring, Monitoring and Quality Assurance (regular visits to 4 mini-SOLE hubs; monitoring visits; mentoring support; internal quality assessment; collection of success stories; analysis of results)	8,000
Travel and Field Missions (travel by public transport; business trips; per diems; accommodation during two-day missions; local transportation)	12,000
Communication, Visibility and Dissemination (project launch event; final regional forum; information materials; banners; brochures; printing of success stories; photo and video documentation; dissemination of project results)	12,000

SOLE Methodology Development (updating methodological manuals; adaptation of materials; design; layout; printing; development of a methodological package for new communities)	7,000
External Evaluation and Audit	9,000
Operational Support (telephone communication; internet; bank charges; office supplies; courier services; postal expenses)	5,000
Staff Wellbeing and Burnout Prevention Activities (1 four-day retreat for 10 project team members)	10,700
Contingency Reserve	6,000
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT BUDGET</b>	<b>484,100</b>