

Maria Sharapova Foundation Scholarship for Youth from the Chernobyl-affected Areas of Belarus

Project Concept

I. Strategy

The Maria Sharapova Foundation Scholarship for Youth from the Chernobyl-affected Areas of Belarus is a joint initiative between the Maria Sharapova Foundation, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as 'the Foundation') and the United Nations Development Programme (hereinafter referred to as 'the UNDP').

The main goal of the project is to provide gifted and talented but economically disadvantaged youth from the Chernobyl-affected regions of Belarus with the financial means necessary to pursue studies in the field of fine arts at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts and in a variety of fields still to be determined at the Belarusian State University – the two educational establishments approved by the Foundation as the scholarship partners. The project will encourage and empower youth from families of limited financial means to develop their personal and leadership qualities and professional knowledge and skills and thus, in the long run, will facilitate more intensive development of the potential of the target youth.

The project aims to establish a scholarship mechanism enabling talented students from Chernobyl-affected families and regions to gain better access to high-quality education in the leading universities of the country. The scholarship will provide cash grants to recipients that will enable them to cover tuition (where not covered by a stipend) and living costs related to their studies. The Maria Sharapova Foundation Scholarship will be the first one in Belarus funded from a non-government international source to support studies within the country.

Expected output of the project:

- Scholarship mechanism established and functioning in the two selected universities in Belarus.
- Five-year scholarships awarded to outstanding students of fine arts and other fields in Belarus

II. The scholarship benefits

Scholarship recipients will receive a cash grant equal to \$3,500 for each academic year. The scholarship will take the form of a lump sum to be awarded at the beginning of each semester in two installments equal to \$1,750. Funds for this purpose will be transferred by UNDP to each university; the universities will then award the funds to the students. The funds will be awarded in Belarusian rubles at the current dollar:ruble exchange rate.

The scholarship will benefit both the students and the universities concerned:

The students will

- receive a scholarship grant which they can use to cover tuition (where applicable), living costs, and other expenses related to their studies;
- master their personal and professional skills; and
- receive additional opportunities to participate in various events related to their studies (including exhibitions, contests, conferences, etc.), both in Belarus and abroad;

The universities will

- gain more experience in implementation of international projects;
- build their capacity in providing better educational opportunities to talented youth in Belarus; and
- receive additional opportunities to promote themselves at specialized cultural events both in Belarus and abroad.

III. The selection criteria

Three new five-year scholarships will be awarded each year for four years to students starting their first year at university (see attached table). Scholarship recipients will be selected on a competitive basis according to the criteria below. The scholarship will be awarded without discrimination, direct or indirect, on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, religion or creed, handicapped status of applicants or any other circumstances.

To qualify:

- Applicants must be residents of the Republic of Belarus;
- Applicants must have official status of a “person who suffered from the Chernobyl Disaster” or have lived for a significant period in the Chernobyl-affected regions of Belarus before enrolling in the university¹;
- Applications must demonstrate financial need;
- Applicants must be active participants in public/extracurricular/scientific/volunteer/charitable and/or other similar activities;
- Applicants must have a record of outstanding academic performance in secondary school; and
- Applicants must have gained admission to the Belarusian State Academy of Arts (in any faculty) or to the Belarusian State University (in a fine arts faculty).²

To apply:

- Applicants must submit a short letter explaining their qualifications along with supporting documents to the selection committee by the announced deadline; and

¹ As a result of the Chernobyl Catastrophe, 23% of the territory of the Republic of Belarus and 2 million people, including 500,000 children, were directly affected. Up to 1.3 million of people including over 200,000 children are estimated to still live in the contaminated areas.

² A list of the specific faculties covered by the scholarship at the Belarusian State University will be agreed between UNDP and the Maria Sharapova Foundation.

- Where relevant, applicants must submit samples of their art work to the selection committee.

Relatives of Maria Sharapova and UNDP staff members and their relatives are not eligible for the Scholarship.

Each recipient will be awarded the Scholarship for a full five-year course of study leading to the award of a degree, provided that he/she continues to demonstrate good academic performance (mark 9 or above in major subjects and an average of mark at least 7 in all other subjects). Recipient performance (namely, academic average and motivation confirmed by active participation in extracurricular activities and events) will be reviewed by the selection committees in each of the two universities on a semester-by-semester basis (i.e., twice per academic year). If the recipient withdraws from the university or fails to meet the academic performance criteria, he/she will lose eligibility to continue receiving the scholarship.

IV. Selection Process.

Each of the two universities will create a selection committee to identify prospective candidates for the Scholarship from among applicants who have gained admission to the first year of study. The selection committees will adhere to the selection criteria (see above). Where necessary (as in the case of demonstrating financial need), these criteria will be defined more specifically in discussions between the universities and UNDP, which will then secure the approval of the Foundation. Selection committees will include representatives from UNDP and the Ministry of Emergencies.

Each year each of the two selection committees will prepare a shortlist of no more than ten candidates for final selection and endorsement by the Maria Sharapova Foundation.

The university selection committees will also review the academic progress of current scholarship recipients on a semester-by-semester (twice-yearly) basis. Successful completion of such a review is mandatory for continued receipt of scholarship grants.

Each year the Maria Sharapova Foundation will select a total of three scholarship winners from the shortlists prepared by the university selection committees. The aim will be to choose two recipients from the Belarusian State Academy of Arts and one from the Belarusian State University each year. However, in the event of a surplus of qualified candidates from one institution or the other, the Foundation may choose a different allocation of new scholarships (all three to one university, for instance).

This structure will allow the scholarship program to run for eight years in total (as detailed in the attached table), and enable twelve students to benefit from the five-year scholarship. This approach will give the scholarship longevity, prestige, and visibility.

If the partners are in agreement on the success of the program, UNDP and the Maria Sharapova Foundation may agree to extend the program and provide additional funding so that additional recipients can be selected in the years following the fourth year of the program and the total number of active scholarship recipients can remain steady.

V. Scholarship Advisory Board.

An advisory board will be created to monitor the Maria Sharapova Foundation scholarship program.

The Maria Sharapova Foundation Scholarship Advisory Board will be composed of representatives of:

The Maria Sharapova Foundation;
The Belarusian State University;
The Belarusian State Academy of Arts;
UNDP; and
The Ministry of Emergencies of Belarus.

Meetings of the Maria Sharapova Foundation Scholarship Advisory Board will be organized on an annual basis by UNDP and chaired by a representative of the Ministry of Emergencies.

The Advisory Board will review the results of the scholarship programme and, if relevant, suggest adjustments to UNDP and the Maria Sharapova Foundation.

VI. Timetable.

Note: This is a provisional timetable and is subject to further discussion between UNDP and the two universities.

A call for applications for the Maria Sharapova Foundation Scholarship will be made no later than by 31 July each year. The deadline for submitting applications will be 1 September each year. The selection committee at the two universities will review the applications and present their short lists to the Maria Sharapova Foundation by 15 September. The Maria Sharapova Foundation will select the final list of scholarship winners by 1 October.

The selection committee will review the progress of each scholarship recipient on a semester-by-semester basis. This review will be completed by 28 February and 1 October.

On the basis of this review, the selection committees will endorse the continued payment of scholarship grants to all scholarship recipients who continue to meet eligibility criteria. Should scholarship recipients lose their eligibility, the funding for their grants will be held in reserve and awarded to new scholarship recipients in future selection processes.

VII. Project Budget

Budget Item	Calculation of the cost of scholarship	Total for 8 years, USD
Scholarship resources	12 students x USD 3,500 per year x 5 years	210,000*
Overheads (GMS) (7%)		14,700
<i>Total</i>		<i>224,700</i>

* The Scholarship amount of \$3,500 per year will be provided to scholarship recipients as a cash grant in two installments (of \$1,750 each). At their own discretion, recipients will use the funds to cover tuition (where applicable), living expenses and other costs.

VIII. Management Arrangements.

Close cooperation of the following parties is foreseen:

- The Maria Sharapova Foundation, Inc. ;
- The UNDP Country Office (CO) in Belarus;
- The Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl;
- The Belarusian State University ³;
- The Belarusian State Academy of Arts ⁴;
- The Ministry of Emergencies of Belarus.

The **Maria Sharapova Foundation, Inc.** will act as a donor of the project. It will sign a grant agreement with UNDP and will annually fund the amount required to cover the scholarships committed to based upon the funding chart attached to the Project Concept. The funds will be disbursed to the UNDP CO in Belarus in eight portions over the initial eight-year life span of the scholarship programme, starting in 2009, transferred on an annual basis by 30 June. Overheads (GMS) will be paid with the first installment in 2009. The Maria Sharapova Foundation, Inc. will also review shortlists of candidates and select scholarship recipients each year.

The **UNDP CO in Belarus** will ensure smooth implementation of the project. It will be directly responsible to the Foundation for delivering the agreed project output. In particular, the UNDP CO will be responsible for:

- Receiving and administering the scholarship funds from the Foundation, reporting for the use of funds in accordance with the UNDP Financial Regulations, Policies and Procedures;
- Management of relations with the universities;

³ <http://bsu.by/main.asp?id1=11>

⁴ <http://www.belam.by.com/default.aspx>

- Development and establishment of the scholarship framework, including the students' selection procedure, in close cooperation with all the project parties;
- Participating in university selection committees that will prepare shortlists of recommended scholarship candidates;
- Assisting the universities in registration and tax exemption of scholarship resources in line with the relevant legislation of the Republic of Belarus;
- Ensuring proper visibility of the project;
- Monitoring of the project implementation in accordance with the UNDP rules and procedures; and
- Promoting synergies with other UNDP post-Chernobyl recovery efforts in the affected areas.

The UNDP CO and each of the two universities will sign a project cooperation agreement based on which each of the universities will register and exempt from taxes the scholarship resources received as foreign charitable aid. The UNDP CO will transfer funds to the universities on an annual basis once the scholarship recipients are selected and approved by the project parties. The universities will provide annual financial and substantive reports to the UNDP CO in Belarus on the utilization of funds.

Each of the universities will:

- Develop in cooperation with other project partners Regulations of the Scholarship and ensure that they are approved by the universities' management boards;
- Establish a selection committee⁵ and ensure that representatives of UNDP Belarus and the Ministry of Emergencies are among its members;
- Announce competitive selection of candidates for the scholarship with clearly defined selection criteria agreed with UNDP and approved by the Foundation (see section IV above). The information on the scholarship shall be communicated in an open and friendly manner to ensure as wide coverage of the target project group as possible and highlighting the gender equality approach;
- Take part in the process of reviewing scholarship applications and short-listing scholarship recipients;
- Present the shortlists (up to 10 candidates from each university each year) for review by the Maria Sharapova Foundation for final selection of the Scholarship recipients;
- Disburse the scholarship funds in the form of grants to the selected students according to the list approved by the Maria Sharapova Foundation;
- Inform the UNDP CO and the Foundation in a timely manner on any issues and risks relating to the scholarship and/or project implementation;
- Provide in-kind contribution to the project in a manner to be agreed by the parties (such as free access for the scholarship recipients to the universities' sports and fitness facilities, free transportation to major conferences, contests and other events related to studies, etc. – to be agreed further at the stage of developing the Regulations of the Scholarship).

⁵ The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the selection committee is subject to prior approval by the UNDP CO in Belarus

In its capacity as the focal coordinating agency in Belarus for all post-Chernobyl recovery issues, the **Ministry of Emergencies of Belarus** will:

- Support the scholarship registration and tax exemption process;
- Take part in reviewing and shortlisting scholarship applications through participation in the selection committees at both universities; and
- Delegate a representative to chair meetings of the Scholarship Advisory Board.

The **Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl** will:

- Facilitate communication between the Foundation and UNDP CO in Belarus;
- Ensure visibility of the Maria Sharapova Foundation Scholarship programme at the UN HQ level; and
- Support organizing the virtual Scholarship Advisory Board meeting/s when the board members are not available to attend in-person.

Three new five-year scholarships awarded every year for four years. Total amount: 210,000

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
	Academic year 1	Academic year 2	Academic year 3	Academic year 4	Academic year 5	Academic year 6	Academic year 7	Academic year 8
Arts Academy 1	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500			
Arts Academy 2	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500			
BSU 1	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500			
Arts Academy 3		3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500		
Arts Academy 4		3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500		
BSU 2		3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500		
Arts Academy 5			3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	
Arts Academy 6			3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	
BSU 3			3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	
Arts Academy 7				3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500
Arts Academy 8				3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500
BSU 4				3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500
Total per ac. year:	10,500	21,000	31,500	42,000	42,000	31,500	21,000	10,500