

USAID MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS SUPPORT ACTIVITY (PPMG)

SEPTEMBER 2015

SERVICE CENTER FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN AND PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES OPENED



Maureen Cormack, U.S.A. Ambassador in BiH at the opening of the Service Center

The ceremony of opening the Service Center “Give Us a Chance” in Banja Luka, the activities of which will be conducted by the Children’s Educational Center “Svjetlice” having signed a grant agreement between the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Association of families and children with learning disabilities “Give Us a Chance” from Sarajevo, was conducted on September 19, 2015.

The opening of the Service Center “Give Us a Chance” in Banja Luka was supported by: Slobodan Mitrović – the Mayor of Banja Luka, Maureen Cormack – the U.S. Ambassador in BiH who opened the center, Ines Kavalec

– the President of the Association “Give Us a Chance” and by Željka Perišić – the President of the Children’s Center “Svjetlice”. The support of the American people via USAID reflects, among other things, in the fact that the Service Center in Banja Luka, besides the Sarajevo Service Center, will have the opportunity to provide free support to families of children and persons with developmental disabilities regardless of their age, type or degree of disability. Some of the services include: psychological support, education of academic and volunteer staff and aid in crisis situations.



Newly opened Service Center before the opening ceremony

Opening of the Service Center “Give Us a Chance – Svjetlice” marked the beginning of a new stage for the equal members of the BiH society – children and persons with developmental disabilities. A child or a person with developmental disabilities in BiH rarely has the opportunity for education, inclusion and equal participation in the society. Opening the

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Milica Trubajić, user of "Give Us a Chance – Svjetlice" Service Center during the grand opening

Service Centers that provide services to children with developmental disabilities represents a contribution to the achievement of the idea of a society with equal opportunities for everyone. The work of the Center is based on providing free services for families of children and persons with developmental disabilities, regardless of the age or degree of disability.

In addition to the inclusive approach, opening of the Service Center is of particular significance for the families of persons with developmental disabilities because they will have support, conscience and a different perspective of upbringing and working with an equal member of not only their family, but also of the society. The Service Center in Banja Luka is the first Center of this character and purpose in Banja Luka and Republika Srpska. What the American Ambassador in BiH Maureen Cormack stated is the fact that social interests are always the same when it comes to children and that "Give Us a Chance" is a place that will always have its doors wide open for all children from Banja Luka and its neighboring municipalities.

The Center is the place that will not only strengthen women and mothers but also whole families that daily face the sense of inferiority, helplessness or complete invisibility of their children in the society. Sadly, there

is no official register of children and persons with developmental disabilities that require a similar form of support regardless of their age and degree of disability in BiH. Inclusive class, specialized educational institution or complete exclusion from the educational system due to a high degree of disability are usually the only 3 options available for families of children and persons with developmental disabilities. Abandonment, neglect, discrimination and institutionalization become an unknown term when they and their families are given the opportunity for self-development

Project title: Service Center "Give Us a Chance"

Project duration: 24 months

Project value: 527,444 BAM

Implementation partners: Association for supporting children and persons with developmental disabilities „Give Us a Chance“ in collaboration with the Children's Educational Center "Svjetlice"

Implementation locations: Sarajevo (Novi Grad and Centar Municipality) and Banja Luka



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Almost 30,000 children with developmental disabilities in BiH receive support exclusively from their own families, from individual institutions or through sporadic education. A child or a person with developmental disabilities in BiH rarely has the opportunity for education, inclusion and equal participation in the society. By opening the second Service Center “Give Us a Chance” in BiH, these facts are gradually becoming a thing of the past. Inclusion is not a manner to involve these persons into the processes in their communities, but a manner to adjust these communities primarily to them and also to their families through adequate programs, support and activities.



*Performance of the Center users
for the grand opening*

“We all have the same interests when it comes to the welfare of our children.”

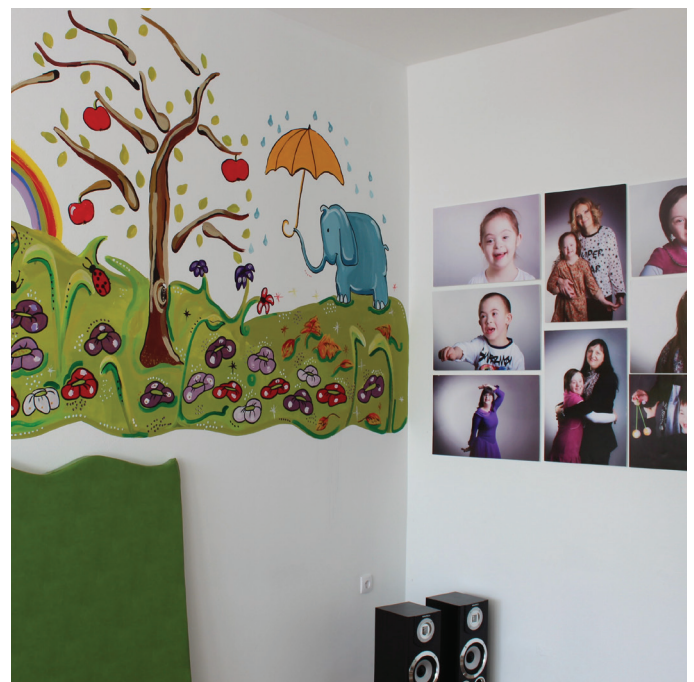
Statement of Maureen Cormack, the U.S. Ambassador in BiH, at the ceremony of opening the Center

Summary:

A 2-year project implemented in the form of providing essential support to the activities of the existing and opening two new Service Centers in Sarajevo and Banja Luka. Activities of the centers are based on providing free services to families of children and persons with learning disabilities regardless of their age or degree of disability.

On the day of the opening of the Service Center “Give Us a Chance – Svjetlice” in Banja Luka, Milica Trubajić, a girl with Down syndrome, whose drawings decorated the area of the newly opened center, greeted her peers, guests and the media with a recital and smile. According to her own words, she is happy to have a new place to play and meet new friends. For her family, the Center represents a new encouragement in upbringing and development of their daughter who was given the opportunity to have a team of experts working with her – an educated academic and volunteer cadre.

The video story on the significance of opening the Service Center is available [here](#).



Interior of the newly opened Service Center in Banja Luka



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USERS AND PARTNERS ON OPENING THE SERVICE CENTER FOR FAMILIES AND PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES “GIVE US A CHANCE” IN BANJA LUKA

“We are lucky to see the civil society, parents and authorities working together in improving the living quality of the most sensitive and the most important social category – our children.”

Maureen Cormack, the U.S. Ambassador in BiH

“Sometimes it is a problem to leave the child alone or having to take him with you. You simply need a place to leave him knowing that there are people there who know what he needs, what his requirements are and that he is socializing, instead of being left alone.”

Vera Višić, a parent

“We have an exceptionally organized area for children with developmental disabilities and their families in order to create a corner for them or conditions for them to live a normal life.”

Slobodan Gavranović, the Mayor of Banja Luka

“When you become a parent of a child with developmental disabilities you are in a sense punished for being a black sheep in the society. In order to provide the opportunity for these families to at least take care of their health, or of their typical child – since they are neglected because the parents focus on the child requiring full-day attention – the Service Center provides precisely the type of service where a child or a person can spend maximally four hours with experts.”

Ines Kavalec, the President of the Association
“Give Us a Chance” Sarajevo

TEACHING EQUIPMENT FOR TWO SCHOOLS IN GLAMOČ

A number of schools in Canton 10 constantly face problems such as: low economic development rate, high unemployment rate, poverty and mass migrations. Accordingly, the functioning of the educational institutions is not at the highest level, particularly when it comes to preventing mass migrations and improving the cadre that can contribute to a better tomorrow of the whole community. This generated the idea of a project entitled “Improving the Quality of the Educational System in



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Glamoč". Since the Center for Civic Cooperation has been aiding schools, students and teachers in improving the conditions of performing classes for over 20 years, an initiative was started through which the Center, as the chief partner in the project, continued its vision. Through this activity, two schools in Glamoč, an elementary and a high school were provided with incentives for a more quality conducting of classes through modern classroom equipment, computers, technical and other equipment necessary for performing practical classes in vocational fields. The motive behind the initiative is to try, at an area such as Glamoč, and decrease the migration rate, unemployment and poverty through a greater quality in education that every child deserves in every part of BiH. Considering that the voice of small social communities in BiH is often not heard, the initiative is simultaneously a manner to attract attention to one of the most important segments of the future of BiH, namely – the children.



lessons from different subjects and equipment for performing PE lessons.

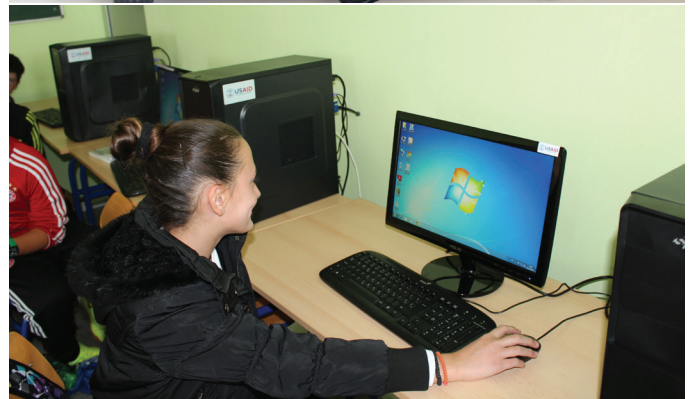
The listed equipment significantly improved the quality of performing classes in Glamoč for over 400 elementary and high school students.



Elementary School Glamoč students with PE equipment

As a part of the initiative, "Tin Ujević" High School will be awarded with modern chemistry lab equipment that will make it easier for students and teachers to conduct experiments and demonstrations in this area. Also, computers and technical equipment for the computer lab and necessary equipment for performing practical lessons in the field of hospitality will also be provided.

"Glamoč" Elementary School will be awarded with, among other things, technical equipment for conducting



Schools were delivered the technical and other equipment required for practical classes

Marginalized Populations Support Activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Implemented by USAID's Contractor Institute for Youth Development KULT
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