



**USAID**  
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# Sanja's story: I find happiness in making others happy

## “Fond za podršku u razvoju biznisa marginaliziranim grupama žena”



Project title: Fond za podršku u razvoju biznisa marginaliziranih grupa žena

Project duration: 1. 10. 2016. - 28. 10. 2017.

Funding: 680.000 KM

Project implemented in: Zvornik, Livno, Kalinovik, Visoko, Rudo, Tešanj, Teslić, Konjic i Prijedor

*Project summary:* Cooperation between USAID/PPMG and its partners – local self-government units – fosters an environment conducive to establishing and improving institutional mechanisms for supporting businesses owned by marginalized women.

We all want to be happy, but when making other people happy is what brings you happiness, you face a lot more obstacles. Sanja Idrizović from Konjic experienced this first hand. This young girl studied psychology so she can be at the service of people who need her to make their lives better and easier.

Sanja finished her psychology studies successfully, but her job search wasn't so successful. She worked only occasionally, which made her feel like she was giving very little when she wanted to give much more. Seeing her fellow citizens becoming alienated from the society because of hardship, poverty and health issues only made Sanja's resolve stronger.

With the support of USAID's Fund for supporting businesses owned by marginalized women and the Municipality Konjic she opened a psychological counseling center. She used the money she received from the fund to furnish a space that turned into a refuge for many of her fellow citizens. Sanja provides support to persons with psychological difficulties, children with developmental disabilities and people who only need a little bit of conversation to put a smile on their faces. In Konjic, a small town on the river Neretva, going to see a psychologist is still considered taboo, a topic that is never part of the neighborhood chatter. But Sanja is not giving up, she will get through every obstacle life puts in her way.

“It's hard, but you have to forge on. People are becoming braver and more aware that they need help, that they can't and shouldn't solve all problems alone. I don't pick and choose who I work with, my door is open to everyone.” says Sanja, whose eyes light up every time she mentions how much progress her users are making. Her eyes lit up when we entered a room full of laughter and cheerful comments, the room where Sanja was holding one of her workshops.

About a dozen men and women, persons with psychological difficulties, most of them lonely, talked about love and jealousy, things that make our lives bitter or happy. Their conversations were riddled with funny remarks, wise thoughts and a lot of laughter. They all came here to seek respite, to be understood and not pushed away, back to the margins of the society. “We're here to learn, talk and laugh. We learned that we only get one life to live and we should try to make it as happier as possible,” says one of the participants, while putting away his notebook where he was writing down all the wise things that have been said, and which will be his motivation until the new workshop. After this, Sanja is leaving to hold another workshop. She doesn't mind walking the streets of Konjic to visit those who can't come to her Center. She says it's not about doing big things, it's about doing small things with a big heart.

Opening her Psychological Counseling Center made Sanja happy, and now she can put smiles on the faces of others. She succeeded where many have failed. She won the battle against taboos and prejudice. Many of her fellow citizens now seek help fearlessly, and are even willing to pay a token amount for it. Sanja is grateful to the Fund for supporting businesses owned by marginalized women and the Municipality of Konjic for helping her help others, and make a living.

Sanja is one of a hundred women who were supported by USAID's Marginalized Populations Support Activity and nine local units of self-government. These businesses provide them with a livelihood, independence and restore their faith in a better future.