



USAID
OD AMERIČKOG NARODA

Service Center «Dajte nam šansu»

Association for supporting families of children and persons with developmental disabilities «Dajte nam šansu»



Project title: Service Center «Dajte nam šansu»

Project duration: 24 months

Grant amount: 527,444 BAM

Implementing partners: Foundation «Centar za djecu i omladinu sa smetnjama u razvoju» Doboj and Children's Educational Center «Svjetlice» Banja Luka

Locations: Sarajevo (municipalities Novi Grad and Centar) and Banja Luka

About the project: Two-year project implemented through providing essential support to the work of an existing center, and the opening of two new service centers in Sarajevo and Banja Luka. The work of the centres is based on providing free services for families of children and persons with disabilities, regardless of their age or degree of disability.

At the day of the opening of the Service Center «Dajte nam šansu - Svjetlice» in Banja Luka, Milica Trubajić, a young girl with Down syndrome, whose drawings grace the walls of the newly opened Center, welcomed her peers, guests, and media crews with a recital and a smile. She is happy because, as she says, she now has a place where she can play and spend time with others. For Milica's family, the Center is a new impetus for their daughter's education and development, who will now have access to the services of a team of experts – specialized teachers and volunteers.

The Center is a place intended to empower not only women-mothers, but entire families, who every day face a feeling of inferiority, impotence or complete invisibility of their children in the society. Milica became a symbol of all other children and persons with developmental disabilities who need similar support, regardless of their age and degree of disability. She became a symbol of about 30,000 children with development disabilities in BiH. Inclusive classes, specialized educational institutions or complete exclusion from the educational system due to a high degree of disability are almost the only three options available to families of children and persons with developmental disabilities. Abandonment, neglect, discrimination and institutionalization are eliminated once their families are given a chance to fulfill their ambitions like others.

Approximately 30,000 children like Milica in BiH are provided with support only within the family, by an institution, or through occasional education. A child or a person with developmental disabilities in BiH is rarely given a chance at education, employment, inclusion and equal participation in the society. With the opening of the second service center «Dajte nam šansu» in BiH, in addition to the one in Sarajevo, these facts are slowly becoming a thing of the past. Inclusion is not a way of including these individuals in the processes in their communities, but a way of adapting the said communities primarily to them, but also to their families, by providing adequate programs, support, activities. «We all want the same when it comes to the welfare of our children», said Maureen Cormack, US Ambassador to BiH, marking the beginning of a new era for equal members of the society in BiH – children and persons with developmental disabilities.