



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Udruženje mreža
za izgradnju mira

- 1 **POWER** of the women's will 2 3
- 4 **LOCAL HEROES** in action 5
- 6 **ECO-ACTIVISTS** 7
true guards of our future
- 8 **FIGHTERS FOR A BETTER FUTURE** 9
the young people who stays
- 10 **INCLUSION IN PRACTISE** 11
when love wins over prejudice
- 12 **RECONCILIATION** 13
through love and dialogue
- 15 **PEOPLE WHO EDUCATE YOUNG** 15
about art: Sanja and Nusmir

15

inspiring
STORIES

Snaga lokalnog

Snaga lokalnog

**DEAR ACTIVISTS,
DONORS,
PARTNERS
AND CITIZENS**

Every story, every deed, and every meeting with our local communities has the potential to shape our everyday lives and make them better. “Local Works” points out that, although they are often in the shadow of bigger events and global issues, local communities are actually the foundation of society.

Throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are people ready to work together in solving problems and peace-building. Their stories are the evidence of the will, creativity, and persistence of citizens who joined together to create a better future for all of us.

The team gathered through the “Local Works” program implemented by the “Network for Building Peace” investigates, promotes, and shares these inspiring stories and shows that joint efforts and dedication can transform local communities.

In the following pages, we will present the stories about bravery,

solidarity, and determination to build a better society for all of us through common efforts. The stories remind us that every activity, no matter how small it is, may have a deep and positive influence on our lives.

This booklet is not only program documentation, but also a call to action. We invite you to join the “Network for Peace Building”, and together with us shape the positive changes in your local community. Because, as you will see, the “Local Works” is the power that can change the world.

**THE TEAM OF THE “NETWORK
FOR BUILDING PEACE”**

CONTENT

4 **POWER** of the women's will

- 4 **MERSIHA AND HER "PAŠINKE",
A REVOLT OF CHANGES**
- 5 **WAKE UP, BE THE CHANGE!**
- 6 **PIECE BY PIECE FOR A MORE BEAUTIFUL BREZA**



8 **LOCAL HEROES** in action

- 8 **WHEN ACTIVISM REPLACES CRITICISM,
OUTSTANDING RESULTS EMERGE**
- 9 **ASSOCIATION "EHO"
FOR A MORE BEAUTIFUL BILEĆA**



10 **ECO-ACTIVISTS**

true guards of our future

- 10 **WE WILL DEFEND NERETVICA
AT THE COST OF OUR LIVES!**
- 11 **WE CAN ALL BE THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE**



12 **FIGHTERS FOR A BETTER FUTURE**

the young people who stays

- 12 **GREEN ISLANDS
THE TOURISM BRAND OF BOSANSKA KRUPA**
- 13 **ALDIN KRGO:
I CHOOSE TO FIGHT FOR BETTER STOLAC**



14 **INCLUSION IN PRACTISE**

when love wins over prejudice

- 14 **EQUAL RESPECT FOR ALL CHILDREN**
- 15 **"TRAČAK NADE/GLIMPSE OF HOPE"
BIGGER THAN THE SYSTEM**



16 **RECONCILIATION THROUGH**

love and dialogue

- 16 **GRANDE IFETA,
THE VOICE OF LOVE, SOLIDARITY AND HOPE**
- 17 **CHILDREN ARE WORTH SACRIFICING FOR**



18 **PEOPLE WHO EDUCATE YOUNG**

about art: Sanja and Nusmir

- 18 **THE THEATER THAT MAKES NEW GENERATIONS FALL
IN LOVE WITH THE ART OF ACTING**
- 19 **EKO ART - THEATER WHERE CHILDREN GROW**



POWER of the women's will

In a world filled with challenges, some women prove that the limits set before them are not unsurmountable. Through their persistence, resourcefulness, and unstoppable will, these women manage to overcome all the obstacles and create a better life for themselves and their community. They are the proof that nothing is impossible...

MERSIHA AND HER "PAŠINKE", A REVOLT OF CHANGES

"Pašinke" are women from Hajderovići, a village near Zavidovići who decided to found the association as a sign of revolt against a patriarchal system in which a man decides about everything, and show that women can solve problems in their local community faster and better.



MERSIHA



WOMEN CAN DO BETTER



So far, "Pašinke" managed to lift the water supply restrictions in Hajderovići and organized education on the use of the internet and modern technologies, as well as education related to agricultural production. They also initiated the construction of the children's playground and trained women to present their

products on fairs. "Pašinke" regularly organize visits and help to elderly women and they also take care of the health of all women in that area, by providing free gynecological examinations for them. They show that when women join forces only the sky is limit.

It is very important for every woman to get involved in the community, not to let others decide on their behalf on issues concerning women and other general matters... Every day is a struggle, one encounters various obstacles, but we should never give up.

Mersiha Skejić

WAKE UP, BE THE CHANGE!

Being unemployed and retired, for many women in our society often means being without a social life. **Roksanda Mičić** has founded the Association "Probudi se/Wake Up" to gather women from East Sarajevo in one place, especially the retired ones or those who were housewives all their lives. Today, this association has become a place where dormant talents wake up, and people find time for the hobbies which were postponed for some "better future".



ROKSANDA



AWAKENING OF TALENTS



The idea of the association is to create a community that will enrich the town with its ecological, agricultural, and touristic offers and thereby influence the employment rate, especially of women. Through various events, women, who were

mostly invisible to the wider community, managed to change their reputation and provide activities that didn't exist in their town before.

I am very proud of our festival 'Pumpkin Days', and the fact that we managed to connect our local community with all other stakeholders from the IFAD Project in agriculture, which resulted in the allocation of greenhouses to 11 women. We are also proud of building and successful managing of the outdoor gym and the sand volleyball court.

Roksanda Mičić



POWER of the women's will

PIECE BY PIECE FOR A MORE BEAUTIFUL BREZA

Amina Rahmanović Omanović and Mersiha Šehić are women from Breza who returned basketball back to "Partizan" Sports Center. Thanks to the enthusiasm that pushed them forward, in a very short period they managed to raise over 30,000 BAM for the sports field that was useless for years. Their wish to make a change, started an avalanche.

Many entrepreneurs, organizations, but also students and pensioners, reacted to their invitation to donate money. Children were spending their school holidays on the field, helping and working, citizens were bringing lunch, coffee, and juice to the workers... It was as if everyone were waiting for the opportunity to do something nice for their town. And all happened thanks to the enthusiasm of two women who brought "Partizan" back to community.



AMINA I MERSIHA



MORE THAN 30, 000 KM



SPORTS CENTER RENOVATION



We are here to show that nothing is impossible. For any change to happen, one needs to have some will, persistence and readiness to dedicate time to the common good. Someone could do something even better, so, piece by piece, we will have more beautiful Breza, and nicer environment for our children.

Amina and Mersiha



LOCAL HEROES, in action

At the heart of every community, regardless of its size and geographical position, some individuals are ready to take over the responsibility for a better future for all of us. Although their dedication is often left unnoticed outside the borders of their small areas, they do not surrender. These are the people who realized that if we change what we can change around us, our society will be better too.

WHEN ACTIVISM REPLACES CRITICISM, OUTSTANDING RESULTS EMERGE



Faced with numerous problems, Bosnian-Herzegovinean citizens tend to criticize without action. However, there are no results from empty words. Activist Elvir Ibrišimović from Janja knows it very well. He is a History teacher, a member of several non-government organizations and associations, and one of the founders of the R.A.M.E. Foundation.

His social engagement started when he realized that the secondary school in Janja has fewer and fewer students. In cooperation with our people from the diaspora, he renovated and equipped several school cabinets. He is a member of the Association “Eco-Green Activists

Drina/Eko zeleni Drina”, a non-government organization that actively and very ambitiously works to raise environmental awareness and create preconditions for the development of tourism in Janja, especially on the Drina River, in order to motivate entrepreneurs from the diaspora to invest in this area. Together with his friends, Elvir is one of the founders of the R.A.M.E. Foundation which not only provides scholarships but also jobs for pupils and students. After two years of social activism, Elvir encouraged other people to take action and create some sort of a competition.

Today, I have a feeling that people are simply competing, who will do more good deeds in their local community. That shows that we just need to stop wasting our time and energy on dissatisfaction, criticism, and blaming others or blaming the system. It is important to start working, and the results will surely come.

Elvir Ibrišimović



ASSOCIATION “EHO” FOR A MORE BEAUTIFUL BILEĆA

Education, culture, ecology, but also healthy lifestyles, interesting hobbies, and quality spent time are the main directions in which “Eho” wants to provide new perspectives for the young.

(I) LOVE MY TOWN



The Association “Eho” was founded two years ago, and through their activities, they want to improve the lives of the young people in Bileća. A small group of people, consisting mainly of educational workers and entrepreneurs gathered with the common aim – to make Bileća a better place to live. They primarily direct their efforts and energy to enable young people to spend meaningful and quality time in their town. Under the motto “(I) Love My Town”, they organized numerous eco-actions, as well as musical and drama clubs, and after 30 years, they also started an initiative to re-establish the Elementary Music School in Bileća. Along with all that,

members of the Association also work on peace-building and reconciliation. Lazar Gnjata, the President of the Association's Assembly, emphasizes the project “Da o(p)stajemo zajedno/To Survive Together” organized in cooperation with the Association “Druga priča/Another Story” from Trebinje. Focusing on interreligious dialogue and cooperation, the young people from Bileća had a chance to visit Sarajevo, the Orthodox Church at Baščaršija, the Jewish Museum of BiH, and Gazi-Husrev Beg's Mosque with Madrasa and the Franciscan Monastery in Fojnica.

Through this project, some children met other religions or visited Sarajevo for the first time in their lives. That is why we are especially proud of it.

Lazar Gnjata



ECO - ACTIVISTS

true guards of our future

Eco-activism is a powerful initiator of social change. Passionate efforts of individuals who just want to protect our natural resources and environment are more and more visible. Whether they install trash cans, clean the landfills, prevent the construction of mini hydroelectric power plants, change the laws, or denounce those that pollute our rivers, eco-activists are fearless and they are not afraid of failure.

WE WILL DEFEND NERETVICA AT THE COST OF OUR LIVES!

Bosnia and Herzegovina is the sixth country in Europe in terms of drinking water and the Neretvica River is drinkable even 25 kilometers from its source. That is a world phenomenon. Despite that, the authorities approved the construction of 17 mini hydroelectric power plants on the Neretvica River. Still, they didn't count on the people, the Kličani who stood up against this ecocide project, which entailed cramming the entire Neretvica basin into pipes with a diameter of up to 1.8 meters.

After finding out about the construction of the mini hydroelectric power plants, all six associations from the Neretvica Valley joined forces to make a physical barrier on the river and prevent the entry of excavators into it. Soon after, the association of citizens "Neretvica – Pusti me da tečem" was registered, and now it has over 1,000 active members and over 5,000 followers that support their fight on social networks. Although their fight

We don't have a leader. The leader is the people who had the strength to oppose and defend the river by their own lives.

Safet Sarajlić



lasted for years, in October 2022, the clients of the project were left without almost all permits for its implementation. Once again, the citizens showed that joint work always brings positive outcomes. Instead of the hydroelectric power plants, the campaign **"15 swimming areas instead of 15 hydroelectric power plants" was launched.** Beaches, fountains, and jumping jacks were constructed, and visited by hundreds of people every day in the summer season.

THE RESULT
OF KLIČANI'S ASSOCIATION IS THE ADOPTION OF THE LAW ON ELECTRIC ENERGY IN THE FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA WHICH PROHIBITS THE CONSTRUCTION OF MINI HYDROELECTRIC POWER PLANTS.

WE CAN ALL BE THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE

Three years ago, Safet Kubat, an environmental activist and human rights defender from Zenica, founded the Facebook group "RIJEKE BIH – BUDI PROMJENA/RIVERS OF BIH – BE THE CHANGE". Today it is a movement with over 60,000 members. The slogan of the group is "TAKE A PHOTO – POST, TAKE A PHOTO – REPORT, TAKE A PHOTO – DO".

f RIVERS OF BIH – BE THE CHANGE

The principle is simple. If you see someone throwing the trash, take a photo of it and post it on the group, then report it to the inspection, and then clean up the trash and post a photo of the location you cleaned. Today in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thanks to a Facebook group, 60,000 eco-police officers send evidence of pollution to inspections, regularly clean landfills, picnic areas, and river banks, and report the polluters... This is not a typical Facebook

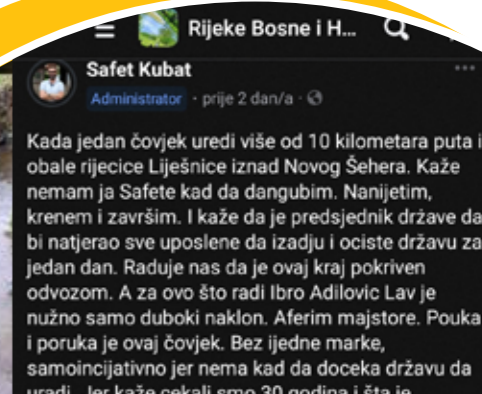
We have changed the perception that ecology is a problem for the elite. Ecology is the problem of people with empty stomachs and we are more aware of it.

Safet Kubat



activism. The group members turn their words into acts. So far they organized 3,500 cleaning activities in different areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina. A total of 200,000 trees were planted, and over 200,000 pieces of fish were released into rivers and creeks. More than 20,000 people participated in their activities in the field. For one day, **850 activists collected over 30 tons of trash in Zenica.**

Through a Facebook group, Safet showed how strong the power of social networks is today, but he also showed that we can all be the change that we want to see if we are ready to act.



FIGHTERS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

the young people who stays

They break the stereotypes of the young people who are passive and uninterested. They show that they have the strength, the will, and the determination to create a better future. Their projects and initiatives become successful business stories, which is why those who left the country start thinking about their return.

GREEN ISLANDS – THE TOURISM BRAND OF BOSANSKA KRUPA

For many years now “Zeleni otoci/ Green Islands” have been the most popular swimming location in Krajina. All attractions are free for visitors, including the children's playground and the sports fields. Evenings are filled with summer plays, performances or other cultural events, and for more adventurers visitors rafting, hiking, and camping is available also....



The amusement park “Zeleni otoci” is located on wonderful small islands in Bosanska Krupa. The idea of the park first appeared in 2015, and it was initiated by two friends, enthusiasts, and nature lovers Dino Bešlagić and Dino Zjakić. Two friends and their fellow citizens organized numerous sports, eco, and cultural events for many years, eventually, they came to the idea of building a place for young

people and families with children on these islands. Today, this is one of the most successful stories in Bosanska Krupa. Since the beginning, these two friends have had a single aim: to promote the natural beauties of Bosanska Krupa and the whole Krajina area. That is why they constantly strive to improve their offer and extend the employee network. Today, they can proudly confirm that they succeeded.



In Bosanska Krupa, people now talk about tourism with special attention. Our aim is to engage as many young people as possible. That way, we will connect them to the town and they won't leave the country, and the ones that had left will wish to return.

Dino Zjakić

OSTANAK MLADIH

ALDIN KRGO: I CHOOSE TO FIGHT FOR BETTER STOLAC

In the times when many young people leave their hometowns in search of a better life, Aldin Krgo from Stolac decided to stay and help his town to regain some of its old glow. . This Bachelor of Sports Coaching and the founder of the School of Sports and Association “Koraci Mladosti/Steps of Youth” has been socially engaged for many years.



Through this association, he helped provide scholarships for pupils and students, he participated in the organization of sports and cultural events in Stolac, and he also initiated the reconstruction of Mehmedbašića House, the national monument from the 19th century which was, despite its beauty, empty and neglected for many years. Now this is the favourite overnight stay for numerous tourists who visit Stolac. Aldin recently mostly worked on the

promotion of the tourist potential of Stolac, showing its beauties to tourists by organizing sightseeing of town amenities, and hiking roundtrips to the Istup waterfall and its pools. From this year on, visitors of Mehmedbašića House have the opportunity to make and taste the traditional Herzegovinian “Smokvara” (Smokvara is a traditional dessert hailing from Herzegovina, prepared with fig jam in dark-brown dough).

“This is the town worth fighting for.”

Aldin Krgo

The experience of making ‘Smokvara’ was declared by National Geographic, as one of the top five experiences in the world. Since the publishing of the article in National Geographic, there has been a growing interest in ‘Smokvara’ in all pastry shops in Stolac, and there is also a growing interest of tourists to learn how to make ‘Smokvara’.

Aldin Krgo



INCLUSION IN PRACTISE

when love wins over prejudice

We all deserve another chance. Everyone needs love, support, and given hand. Eventually, by giving all that to others, we, ourselves, become happier, more mature, and better accepted.

EQUAL RESPECT FOR ALL CHILDREN

The School of Football “Respekt”, the winner of the most prestigious prize Children Award UEFA, is the first school in Europe to open its doors to children with developmental disabilities. In “Respekt”, all children are equal. The mission of the school is to positively shape the healthy psycho-physical development, upbringing, safety, and self-confidence of every school participant through a professionally designed sports education program.



Maybe that is the reason that these high school students are more mature than many adults, they understand the essence of life – as a team we can improve

everyone’s quality of life and at the same time feel immense happiness for everyone’s progress, no matter how small it may be on an individual level.

Many did not believe this story will be successful. They told me – are you still working with those children? These are not “those” children. For us, every child is equal. We are proud of that and we don't give up on our idea. We survive and are proud of everything we have built, of our successes in sport, but also of the kind of people the children who grow up here with us become.

Emir Hujdur



“TRAČAK NADE/GLIMPSE OF HOPE” BIGGER THAN THE SYSTEM

While the system has no solutions for parents and their children with disabilities, responsible, persistent, hard-working individuals prove that everything is possible, even for the children who had been rejected until then and without adequate support, to create a corner where they are loved, accepted, where they have professional staff and therapy that help them develop.



PROFESSIONAL STAFF AND THERAPIES



20 THOUSAND SERVICES



Jelena Vilotić from Foča is one of those special individuals, she founded the Association “Tračak Nade/Glimpse of Hope” in 2010. Jelena wanted to prove that children with developmental difficulties or disabilities needs to get more support

to reach their full potential. Last year alone, **17 employees of the Association provided 20,000 services to more than 100 families** in the wider region of municipality of Foča.

The Association is great support to my child, and to me as a parent. My child found her peace there, her friends and she impatiently waits every new day to go to the Association.

Biljana Lalovac

“TRAČAK NADE” BECAME A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE LEARNS, GROWS, AND DEVELOPS: BENEFICIARIES, CHILDREN, PARENTS, AND EMPLOYEES.



RECONCILIATION THROUGH love and dialogue

There are people whose hearts and souls strive for peace, harmony, and reconciliation. They are the silent heroes who work every day to build bridges between people, even in the areas that experienced the hardest war traumas. Instead of hate, they speak of love, understanding, and tolerance, convinced that there is enough place in this country for all of us.

GRANDE IFETA, THE VOICE OF LOVE, SOLIDARITY AND HOPE

Every year in July, the Peace March starts from the village of Nezuk near Sapna to Potočari. Halfway there, near Nova Kasaba, participants are welcomed with food and refreshments. For fifteen years, a well-known voice of Ifeta Mejremić, known as Ifeta Grande echoes there. She offers hot coffee, tea, and sandwiches. The doors of her home are open for guests from the whole world.



GRANDE IFETA MEJREMIĆ



MARCH PEACE POTOČARI



Women from the Association “Jadar” made a great contribution to building peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because they chose not to be just the victims, but the women who will promote peace, future, and safety.

Their cooperation with women from the Association “Maja” from Kravica, and associations from Vlasenica, Milići, and other places, whose members are people of different nationalities, became a firm foundation for building peace and understanding. It is the foundation on which society there is still being built.

CHILDREN ARE WORTH SACRIFICING FOR



Anyone of us can make changes in society, but the largest responsibility lies in educational and religious institutions.

Guided by that, in 2019, Zdravko Kujundžija with several friends Franciscans and educators founded the Association “Centar za mirovno obrazovanje/Center for Peace Education”. They wanted to invest their knowledge, goodwill, friends and acquaintances in the organization that

would be completely independent of any influences.

Thanks to the Center, 173 young persons from 34 schools went through six cycles of “Peace School”.

One of the cycles included schools from Križančevo Selo and Ahmići, places where the most horrific crimes between Bosniaks and Croats happened. Those two schools, teachers, pupils, and their parents met each other and socialized.

Interreligious dialogue does not happen between Reis and the Cardinal, but between the people in small places. Such programs should become an integral part of the school curriculum because it is more important for children than memorizing different facts – which they can certainly get online whenever they want. I look at those fifteen-year-olds with whom we hang out, and my eyes fill with tears of joy at how smart, good, normal they are, and I always wonder at what moment this society “corrupts” them. I hope that some of these children will find themselves one day in a position when they will decide and make something better or that they will be normal human beings ready to help their neighbor. I know that hardly any of us change a lot, but this doesn’t excuse us from not trying.

Zdravko Kujundžija

PEOPLE WHO EDUCATE YOUNG

about art: Sanja i Nusmir

Inclusion of young people in art activities is necessary in this digital age we we live in. Art helps them to develop critical thinking, self-confidence and social skills. By creating and expressing themselves through art, young people become key actors in shaping the world around us.

THE THEATER THAT MAKES NEW GENERATIONS FALL IN LOVE WITH THE ART OF ACTING

Nusmir Muharemović, the actor in Bosnian National Theater Zenica has founded "Studio teatar/Studio Theater" in 2017 and started "Ljetne večeri/ Summer Nightsfestivals in Europe. He wanted to bring the theater closer to the audience, especially to the young and those who had never seen any play before.



350 - 400 SPECTATORS

That first festival was organized on "veresija" (deferred payment in the Bosnian language). Chairs were borrowed from nearby cafes and some institutions, and the first shows were played by

Nusmir's colleagues for a "cup of coffee". Nowadays, this is a festival that attracts actors and directors from the whole region, and every show is visited by 350 to 400 people.

And when you ask Nusmir what motivates him to continue this story, his answer is straight:

I want to make young people fell in love with theater and I want some new kids to find their future life calling on these theater boards.

Nusmir Muharemović



EKO ART - THEATER WHERE CHILDREN GROW

In 2004, wanting to bring back playfulness and fun to children, Sanja Krnjajić, a dramatic pedagogue from Bugojno created the creative workshops "Zabavnice/ Entertainments". It was an incentive for the development of the children's stage „Eko Art“ which represented 30 shows on the big and small stage, among which there are 4 co-production shows with Associations for children and persons with developmental difficulties "Leptir/Butterfly" and Theater FEDRA.



What makes this theater different and important for the local community, among other things, is the encouragement of children's creativity and the possibility for children and young people to create plays

themselves, drawing attention to problems and phenomena that they consider important. And if you wonder how all of this lasted for so many years - the only real answer is: "In Eko Art, children GROW!"

Exploring drama techniques, children and young people talk about their feelings, anxieties, and problems. In a safe environment, they question and explore, adopt cooperation and compromise as living techniques, get used to being part of the community, and at the same time they grow into healthier, smarter, more compassionate, and better people.

Sanja Krnjajić

30 PERFORMANCES



IMPRESSUM

PUBLISHER

Network For Building Peace

TEXT PREPROCESSING AND PHOTO SELECTION

Vedada Šećerbajtarević

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

VS Design

PRINT

500

Sarajevo, 2023.

Find and read about success stories
from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina
on our website


 www.snagalokalnog.ba

This booklet was written thanks to the generous support of the American people through the “Local Works” program of the United States Agency for International Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina (USAID). The contents of the publication are under the exclusive liability of its author and “Network for Building Peace”. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the USAID or the US Government.

Mreža za izgradnju mira, 2023. | All rights reserved

Network For Building Peace

 Marka Marulića 2,
71 000 Sarajevo

 Tel:+ 387 33 741 080

 www.mreza-mira.net



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Udruženje mreža
za izgradnju mira