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Seminars Empower Local Leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina

by Tina Wolfe



Community leaders from Bosnia-Herzegovina participating in an IOCC sponsored training seminar in Banja Luka.
Photo: Zoran Micic/IOCC

Banja Luka (IOCC) - A month-long training program recently conducted by IOCC opened a prospect for long-term community projects in towns and cities in Bosnia-Herzegovina by bringing together local community leaders.

"We learned new concepts on how to plan ahead, how to make future projections and how to think in terms of survival of our operations beyond the international community's support," said Mr. Radomir Cirkovic, president of the Association for the Disabled after completing the IOCC seminar in the town of Doboje.

The goal of the program is to strengthen the capacity of local organizations and citizen associations and to contribute to the development of civil society and the fledgling nonprofit sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"We cannot serve all the community needs at the municipal level and we must rely on the help and services provided by local non-governmental organizations," emphasized Mr. Djordje Umicevic, Mayor of the Banja Luka Municipality. "This is the first time an international organization has offered us an opportunity to participate in a ceremony like this," he explained to local leaders and IOCC representatives as they celebrated the completion of a training program for local non-governmental organizations on July 21.

The ceremony was the successful conclusion to an IOCC program that provided intensive training in basic management and leadership skills to leaders of non-governmental organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Organizations active in the regions and municipalities of Brod, Derventa, Doboje, Anvil and Banja Luka participated ensuring that the program would have a wide-ranging effect.

Seminars were held in various regions of North and Western Republika Srpska (RS) including Derventa, Doboje, Mrkonjic Grad, Sipovo and Banja Luka. The attendees represented diverse sectors, social interests and constituencies in agriculture, democracy building, youth, conflict resolution, refugees and displaced persons, elderly and disabled, and environmental organizations.

IOCC enlisted the professional training services of multi-ethnic local trainers from RS and the Bosnian Federation, the two entities that make up Bosnia-Herzegovina. The trainers, themselves members of two local non-governmental organizations, had the opportunity to share their experiences and transfer their knowledge and skills to fellow colleagues. Commenting on the opportunity for interaction with other organizations, the president of a Derventa-based beekeeping association "Zlatna Pcela", said "What I've enjoyed most was having the opportunity to meet and network with counterpart organizations that share similar goals and aspirations."

The training program is funded with proceeds generated through a grant of agricultural commodities donated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Grants of up to \$6,000 have enabled participants to not only gain new skills but also to have the opportunity to begin implementing projects discussed collectively during the seminars. Many of the participating organizations have plans to submit project proposals which strive to implement socio-economic, relief and psychosocial related projects in Western RS.

The first grants under the program will be awarded this Fall and will emphasize continued cooperation among the diverse organizations and opportunities for them to advocate policy improvement and recognition of their work at the community and local municipal level.



Mr. Drago Tadic, president of the "BIOS" Association for Paraplegics and Disabled in Derventa, receiving his certificate from Mark Ohanian, IOCC's Head of Office in Bosnia-Herzegovina after completing the training program.
Photo: Zoran Micic/IOCC

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