



FOR THE SAFETY OF EVERY CHILD:

Municipalities of Srebrenica and Sanski Most
have a response to any disaster!



Save the Children

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Italian Development
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Save the Children is the world's leading independent organization for children.

OUR VISION is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

OUR MISSION is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

Project: Resilience-building in 2014 flood affected communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, supported by the Italian Cooperation Agency within the project "Reconstruction and development after May 2014 floods"

Photos and text: Almir Panjeta

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Municipalities of Srebrenica and Sanski Most have a response to any disaster!

Motivated by the experience from previous activities and engagement in the area of risk reduction from natural and other disasters, Save the Children have, through the project „Building resilience to natural and other disasters“, focused on working with key stakeholders in the local communities of Srebrenica and Sanski Most, who would first respond to the scene in case of an emergency, to ensure quick response in the event of natural and other disasters.

The project was supported by the Italian Development Cooperation within the project „Reconstruction and development after May 2014 floods“, and its implementation took place from September 2015 to June 2016.

Stakeholders interviewed after the project all deem that the implementation of project activities made children as well as other citizens of these municipalities much safer. Many activities were conducted in order to achieve this: Memoranda of Understanding between Save the Children and target municipalities were signed, Municipal Disaster Management Committees were established and their members attended additional training sessions, Risk Assessments for threats, vulnerabilities and capacities in the events of disasters were drafted jointly and, as well as Action Plans for the events of natural and other disasters at the local level, which will become official municipal documents after their adoption.

It is particularly important that school disaster management groups have been established and that their members, following additional training, have drafted Risk Assessments for threats, vulnerabilities and capacities in the events of natural disasters and Protection and Action plans in the event of natural and other disasters, with relevant additional protocols and standard procedures at the level of schools.

Additionally, special attention was paid to creating children-friendly materials, but also materials for adults, providing simple guidelines and instructions on how to act in an emergency caused by a natural disaster. Large posters, pertaining to all forms of natural disasters that could affect our country, were put up in all the schools that took part in the project, make the students and the staff aware what steps they need to take in order to protect themselves in the event of a flood, fire, earthquake, landslide, and extreme temperatures. In addition to these general guidelines, child-friendly school-evacuation plans were also made and posted on prominent spots in all classrooms.



AHMED PJANO, Save the Children's Program Manager for North-West Balkans:

„Achieving a safer environment for children by expanding the local capacities“

After Save the Children together with the Ministry of Security of BiH, entity authorities and other partners became fully involved in the area of risk reduction from natural and other disasters at the highest level, which was assessed as exceptionally successful, it became apparent that there was a gap between the progress made at the state level and what was being done on the ground in the local communities. One of the projects aimed primarily to build capacities in the local communities for an adequate response in the event of disaster is called „Building resilience to natural and other disasters“, which was implemented by Save the Children in the municipalities of Sanski Most and Srebrenica.

„Our organization has been involved with the process of development and strengthening of the protection and rescue system since 2012 and, in cooperation with other international actors and competent institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we supported the process of drafting the BiH Threat Assessment and relevant additional documents, with a special focus on children. Having in mind the fact that local communities have the most immediate impact on children, there was a need to bring the process of drafting assessments and action plans for emergency situations to the local level. In cooperation with the Ministry of Security of BiH, and on the basis of adopted Methodology for drafting the threat assessment and Action plans, the priority in implementation of this project was given to the municipalities of Srebrenica and Sanski Most“, says Ahmed Pjano, Program manager of Save the Children for North-West Balkans, highlighting in particular the importance of raising awareness as one of the components of the Project:

„We can't prevent floods, for example, but it is important to raise awareness and readiness of people to act and think proactively about what

could be done to prevent consequences, but also to be prepared for specific and guided action in the event of a disaster“.

„Our aim was not to bring someone from the outside to tell the key stakeholders in the local community what to do and how to do it, but - through employing a multi-sector approach, by establishing municipality working groups that include everyone with a specific role in emergencies, - to expand and improve the local capacities. Civil protection is one of the key stakeholders, but there are also municipal representatives, the police, health institutions, fire-brigades, education system and NGO sector. All of them took part in jointly creating risk assessment and action plan in order to define roles and competencies of everyone involved“, adds Ahmed Pjano.

Considering that, in emergencies, the children are at greatest risk, special focus was placed on the schools. In addition to involving them in the process of drafting risk assessments and action plans on the municipal level, the implementation of this project made it possible for schools to draft their own action plans in the event of natural and other disasters.

„It is of particular importance in this overall process to raise the awareness of decision-makers and competent institutions that are obligated to pay special attention to children. This is not only important once an emergency occurs, but also in the thinking and planning stage. The project was aimed primarily at children but also at parents that now have an increased awareness about the need to build resilience to natural and other disasters“, says Ahmed Pjano, adding that through this and other projects that are being or will be implemented, the work will be done on continuing this process well beyond the finalization of project activities:

„This is why we are happy that the Italian Cooperation, in addition to other forms of help they provided to people in flood-affected areas, recognized the importance of providing support to this type of a project that will have long-term positive effects in these communities“, concludes Ahmed Pjano.



ASMIR KARABEG, Principal of the First Elementary school in Sanski most:

„The aim is for both children and the teaching staff to be prepared, to know the safest evacuation route and the location of the assembly point where they would be safe “

Upon the finalization of the project “Building resilience to natural and other disasters”, which is implemented by Save the Children in the municipalities of Sanski Most and Srebrenica, the First elementary school in Sanski most now has a finalized Action Plan for the events of natural and other disasters on the school level, and the school principal and member of the municipal Disaster management commission Asmir Karabeg says that the training of all staff is now upcoming. Commission has also drafted Risk assessment of threat, vulnerability, and capacities in the event of natural disasters and Action Plan for the events of natural and other disasters on school level.

„It is important that we took part in the drafting of the municipal Plan, but it is particularly important that the school now has their own Action Plan which elevates the student safety to a higher level. As a member of the Committee I attended additional training, and it is now our goal to provide additional training on how to act in line with the Plan to the rest of the teaching and other staff. We have contacted the representatives of the Medical center, fire brigade, civil protection and other services that were involved with the work of the Committee to provide this additional education. They will carry out initial exercises with us, train us in what to do and how , and then it is our plan to organize these exercises with children on how to act in the event of a disaster twice annually. The aim is for both children and the teaching staff to be prepared, to know the safest evacuation route and the location of the assembly point where they would be safe and how to make

sure everything runs smoothly“, says Karabeg.

„Earlier, we had no starting point, and this Project showed where to start from, where we are, and everyone already knows what their role will be at a given moment. When all of this is filtered and classified further, when we designate persons for each segment on the level of municipality and the school then we will be able to say that we have raised security to the highest possible level “, explains Karabeg.

The activities of this Commission led to improved connection and communication between services; it is of particular importance that the Memorandum of Understanding defines who does what in the future as well, so those who will be appointed to these positions after the people that participated in the work of the Commission will be obligated to act in line with that.

„Earlier, we didn’t even have an indication of what an alert was, let alone have a document on the municipal and school level that stipulates in detail who takes action and in which way. I can’t say that all of us didn’t have good mutual communication in the past, after all this is a small community where everyone knows each other, but we had cases of lack of clarity about who needs to be called at which time and what is done by whom specifically and I think that’s all been crystallized now. We have the Memorandum which binds us to act in line with the Plan, so it wouldn’t occur that someone when called will say that they are not competent for that“, underlines Karabeg. He adds that the spirit of the project is especially important because it reinstated the matter of protection of children and adults in natural and other disasters to its rightful place and made it a topic of conversation again.





SAJID RAMIĆ, Civil protection Sanski Most:

„When something happens, we are all in the service of rescue, but in addition to good will we need good organization as well “

Head of Civil protection and firefighting of Sanski Most and one of the members of municipal Committee for disaster management, Sajid Ramić, says that lessons learned after the floods that hit Sanski Most in 2014 have been taken into consideration in the drafting of Risk assessment of threats, vulnerabilities and capacities in the events of natural disasters and Action Plan in the events of natural and other disasters on the municipal level, within the project „Building resilience to natural and other disasters“ which is being implemented in the municipalities of Sanski Most and Srebrenica by Save the Children.

„Through the joint work of representatives of all services involved with the municipal working group and consultations with the representatives of Save the Children, taking into consideration past experiences and following instructions for drafting the Plan and methodology, I can say that we have arrived at a quality assessment and plan that have been harmonized with the European standards of protection from natural and other disasters as well as with all the local legislation“, says Ramić, adding that in addition to floods, fires and extreme temperatures, they also dealt with the threat of animal and plant diseases. He also added that it is important for the Plan to be issued an opinion from the Municipal HQ as a regular body in charge of protection, following which it would be forwarded to confirmation by the municipal mayor.

„Once the municipal mayor confirms the plan then it will become an official municipal document. Our aim was for the municipality to obtain a plan that will, on top of the existing organization, additionally connect all municipal protection structures, improve organization of work in crises and clearly define what each party needs to be doing at a particular

time in order to be as efficient as possible and not waste resources “, says Ramić.

„When an event occurs, we are all in the service of rescue, but previous experiences have shown that in the event of a large disaster, despite the best wishes and engagement of all available men and equipment, we were not that well organized at all times. Immediately following the floods, which were a huge learning experience for us, we at the level of municipality started working on improving our organization, and the assessment that we were working on now and the Plan that stems from this Project have proved to be an excellent complement to that. I think we have a significantly better overview now “, adds Ramić.

In his opinion, it is particularly important that through all the contacts and activities they raised general awareness about the need to organize for the events of natural and other disasters:

„When there are no emergencies, the civil protection and other structures are often marginalized, but when an event occurs everyone is pointing fingers at us and expects us to resolve everything on our own, even though we often have limited means and equipment. It is extremely important to think ahead about the possible disasters and set up prevention“.

He also highlighted the importance of involving the school in the municipal protection team:

„The school is always at the center because it holds children which are the priority. I am also familiar with the special Action Plan, made on the school level, considering that they are most familiar with the condition of the building, evacuation routes and the safest assembly point, which as such is part of the municipal Plan that all of us worked on together“, says Sajid Ramić.



TEHVID HAJRIĆ, expert officer in the Municipality of Sanski Most:

„In disasters, panic is the greatest enemy“

Expert officer in the Municipality of Sanski Most, Tehvid Hajrić, says that in the event of a flood or any other natural disaster one of the most important things is to utilize the full potential of every man on the ground.

„When you have an ongoing disaster, every man counts, and it is important at every moment to send him to a place where he would be of most use and where he could contribute the most. This is why it is extremely important to have an Action Plan for the events of natural and other disaster on the level of municipality, which we have made through this Project, in order to have a clear picture of what each of the actors are doing at any given time, and in order to avoid having too many people or machines sent to one spot, and not having any on another“, explains Tehvid Hajrić, one of the members of the Disaster management Committee of the Municipality of Sanski Most within the project „Building resilience to natural and other disasters“ implemented by Save the Children in the municipalities of Sanski Most and Srebrenica.

„Our municipality went through the experience of great floods that hit BiH two years ago. We have been doing damage assessments and plans of what needs to be done to reduce the risks and prevent damage in a similar event, and this Project came along right at the time which is allowing us to additionally work on connecting all the key actors and reducing the risks“, underlines Tehvid Hajrić. He continues by explaining that the municipality has a running action plan, but that the joint work done in the preparation for the drafting of the Risk assessment of threats, vulnerabilities and capacities in the events of natural disasters and Action Plan for the events of natural and other disaster, a lot has improved on the level of municipality.

„I would particularly like to highlight the multi-sector approach, which gave us the opportunity to learn so much from one another, through the exchange of experiences and positive practices. For example, we have learned about the school methodology and what they do in the event of a disaster, we have exchanged experiences pertaining to fire-prevention, and regardless of the fact that most members are experiences in their respective fields I think that each of us had the opportunity to learn a lot of new and useful things nevertheless“, says Hajrić and returns to Situation assessment and Action Plan:

„Now we know what are all the different things that, apart from the floods that we have already experienced, may occur and how to properly respond depending on the type of disaster that strikes. It is naturally easier, when an event occurs, if we know what each of us needs to do at each moment, what are his/her tasks that have been stipulated and regulated via a Memorandum signed between the institutions involved. It is extremely important to know the situation on the ground at every single moment, which we can learn through our mutual communication, and based on that determine where a given team will be sent. It is particularly important that the school is involved with the entire process, which thus brings the safety of children to a higher level“, explains Hajrić underlining the fact that the work on risk reduction will not end with the finalization of the Project:

„This Project will leave us with a clear Action plan which will give us more security in the future because people will be able to act without panic and following a timeline, because we know that in such situations panic is the greatest enemy“.



CVJETIN MAKSIMOVIĆ,

Municipality of Srebrenica:

“Children should be taught from an early age about the culture of life, which would foster care about protection and conduct in disasters “

One of the important segments that will remain upon the implementation of the Project „Building resilience to natural and other disasters“, which is being implemented in the municipalities of Sanski Most and Srebrenica by Save the Children, according to expert officer in the Municipality and member of the Disaster management Committee of municipality Srebrenica, Cvjetin Maksimović, is the change in the way damage prevention in the event of disaster is thought about.

„We couldn’t say that we didn’t have a coordination system on the municipal level before but certain procedures often ended with having a relevant documentation in place but without specific involvement of all of the actors. It is of particular importance that we have recognized the importance of educating children about risk reduction and behavior in disasters, and there is an initiative to make that type of training part of the educational process by introducing it through one of the courses. Having a trained and prepared teaching staff and educating children about how to behave in the event of a disaster means already having a large portion of the work done “, says Maksimović.

„Children should be taught from an early age about the culture of life, fostering the care about protection, and not just protection once a disaster had already occurred but also about prevention of negative consequences, and when those children grow up to know how to protect their own children, to know for example that they shouldn’t build homes in riverbeds or creeks, or on landslides...“, explains Maksimović.

He emphasized the importance of employing a multi-sector approach to the segment of protection and rescue on the local level by involving representatives of schools, medical

institutions, fire departments and public companies:

„It is a good thing that, in addition to the municipal plan, the school has their own plan, which would facilitate management in an event of disaster because we know that at least in the first phase they have a plan of what to do and how, so that the other actors can get involved further to their invitation if needed “.

In addition to the additional training that the members of the Committee attended, he also underlines the fact that representatives of businesses, which in the course of drafting the Assessment of risks, vulnerabilities and capacities in the event of natural disasters were identified as at risk in the event of a disaster, took part in the drafting of the Action Plan in the events of natural and other disaster on the municipal level.

„In a disaster, it is extremely important to know, at all times, the state of dam at Hydro-electric power plant ‘Perućac’ in Serbia and we have also involved their representatives in our activities so we could at any moment get ‘first hand’ risk assessment from them, but also proposals for specific actions which we could further communicate to the population in order to reduce any possible damage. It is necessary to further educate the population so that they would know how to conduct themselves further to an alarm signal in possible dam-related emergencies, instead of waiting for assistance to arrive“, explains Maksimović.

„We have also involved the representatives of ‘Sase’ mine, which gave us their own assessment, as well as representatives of ‘Putevi Srpske’ company, which could give us an overview of road conditions and map out routes that could be at particular threat or danger in an event of a flood or landslide, as well as representatives of forestry estates and geodetic offices “, he adds.



HASUDIN MUSTAFIĆ, Civil protection of Srebrenica:

“There’s nothing more important than a human life”

there is nothing more important than a human life“, adds Mustafić.

He says that the Municipality of Srebrenica is one of territorially largest in BiH, but scarcely populated.

Hasudin Mustafić from Civil protection in Srebrenica and member of municipal Committee for disaster management within the project „Building resilience to natural and other disasters“, implemented in the municipalities of Sanski Most and Srebrenica by Save the Children, says that the drafting of Assessment of risks of threats, vulnerabilities and capacities in natural disasters and Action Plan in natural and other disasters at the municipal level were timely.

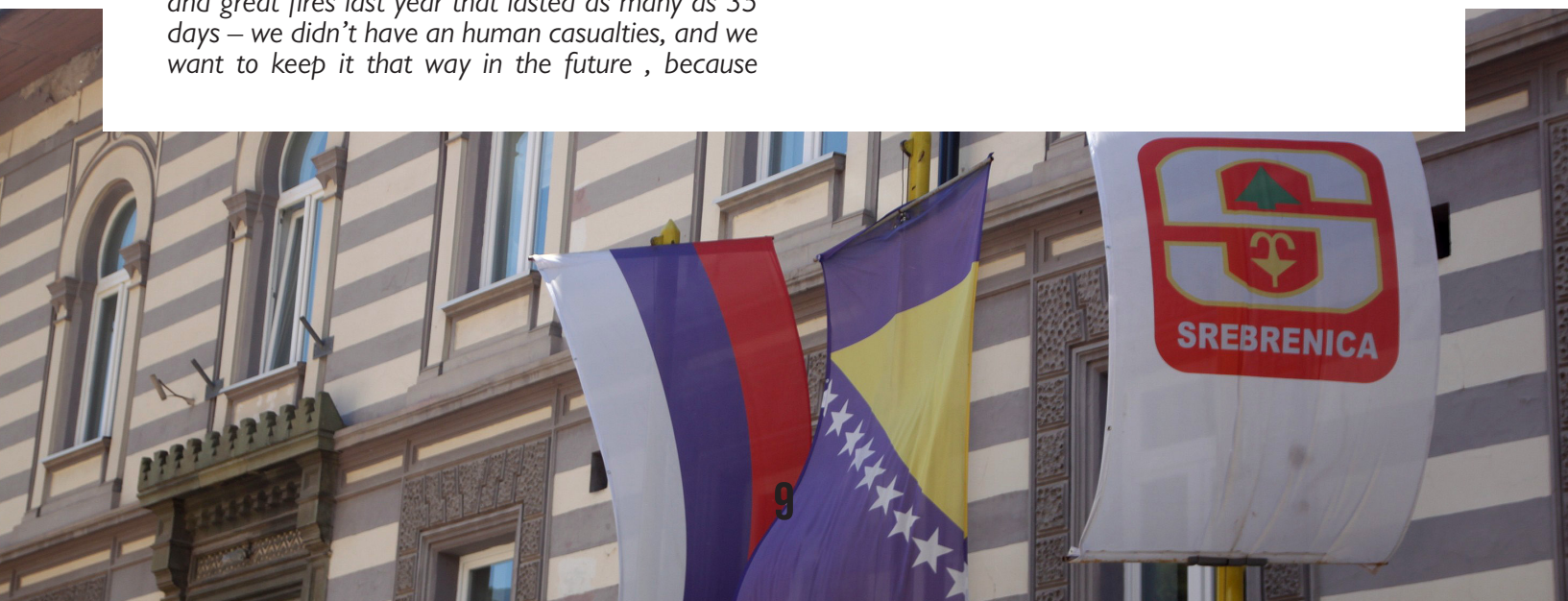
„We had a threat assessment in 2003, we regularly update our plans, and we were planning to draft a new one when Save the Children came along with this project that envisaged the drafting of an assessment, which we were pleased to accept. Now we have an assessment and plan that have been harmonized with the EU standards and one adopted by the Municipal Assembly they will become mandatory documents for all actors-signatories of the mutual Memoranda“, says Mustafić.

„We have covered all aspects from fires, floods, landslides, heavy snowfall, and all other disasters in order to be prepared to respond adequately. In the earlier disasters that struck us – landslides in 2014 and great fires last year that lasted as many as 35 days – we didn’t have an human casualties, and we want to keep it that way in the future, because

„This is a large territory, 90% of it is hills and mountains and 60% is covered in forest. In the event of a large fire it is necessary to mobilize great manpower because there is a problem of lack of local population to become readily engaged in fire-fighting. In many of the villages there is no one and in many other there are only the elderly, which can make the situation more complicated. We are rather poorly equipped and because of that and because of the aforesaid, it is important that we have a specific plan to increase the efficiency of action in the event of a disaster in order to put all available resources to maximum use“, says Mustafić.

In such a situation, when it comes to the safety of children, Mustafić points out the fact that the school has their Action plan as well:

„In the event of a disaster they can act immediately in line with that plan and, since they are also part of the municipal Committee and have participated in the drafting of the municipal Plan, they know which of the other actors they can call upon at what time for assistance, if needed, and after they have followed their plan, which would relieve other actors as well in the event of a larger disaster“.




MILISAV STOJANOVIĆ, janitor:

"I know every nook and cranny in the school building, I am glad that my experiences were used to make a Plan of action in the event of disaster"

Milisav Stojanović works in the maintenance of the building of the First elementary school in Srebrenica and says that he knows that building better than his own house. He was particularly pleased when he and his colleague were invited, as persons who know every nook and cranny of the school, to be members of the municipal Disaster management board established within the project „Building resilience to natural and other disasters“ implemented by Save the Children in the municipalities of Sanski Most and Srebrenica. He is happy that, in addition to all the other actors, someone has finally recognized what maintenance workers can offer if there is a disaster, as they know possible weaknesses of the building, parts of the building that are at a greater risk, as well as safest passage areas.

„I have been working here for about 14 years now and it would be an understatement to say that I know every nook and cranny of this building. I am happy that I had the opportunity to participate in the drafting of the Action plan, together with the other members of this group, and that experiences of me and my maintenance colleague have been taken on board“, says Milisav, who went through additional training with other group members and had the opportunity to exchange experiences at a seminar, which, he says, improved his knowledge of procedures in possible disasters.

"In a disastrous event, my colleague and I are prepared to assist at all times to evacuate the children and teaching staff by adhering to all security procedures in line with the Plan drafted through this Project and to be taken to a secure location as soon as possible", explains Stojanović.

He says that in the drafting of this Plan he highlighted two things he deems important and that the solutions for those issues are already being discussed at the school as well as the municipal group, which he considered to be an additional positive effect of this Project which for the first time gathered 'around the same table' maintenance workers, school principal, representatives of the civil protection, municipality, fire brigade...

„The building is good and stable and I think it's very safe, generally speaking, it would be difficult for anything to damage it. What I presented as a problem that I have personally been dealing with is the fact that electrical power installations are old and that they should be thoroughly replaced. The good thing is that they are not operating under a heavy load, everything is switched off over night, but this is something that we would need to start working on in the near future, and there are some indications already that we will start working on that soon“, says Stojanović, adding another problem he pointed out:

„The school is located at the foot of a hill, and we have assurances that the hill is stable and that landslides couldn't occur; at the side facing the hill we already have a retaining wall, but we at the school think that the protection in that area should be increased additionally in order to have that area reinforced, regardless of the assurances that the hill is stable. We have seen what can happen during the flooding two years ago when landslides became active in this municipality“, says Stojanović.



AMELA HADŽIĆ, deputy Principal of the First elementary school Srebrenica:

„Now we have a response to any possible disaster and a clear Action Plan for a safer school“

Deputy Principal of the First elementary school in Srebrenica, Amela Hadžić, member of the Disaster management Committee of municipality Srebrenica within the project Building resilience to natural and other disasters that is being implemented by Save the Children in the municipalities of Sanski Most and Srebrenica. Committee has drafted the Assessment of risk from threats, vulnerabilities and of capacities in the events of natural disasters and Action Plan in natural and other disasters on the municipal level, and Amela Hadžić points out that it is particularly important that Action Plan for the school has been drafted.

„Through this project the school became involved with the protection activities on the municipal level. Naturally, we have had contact with all the key actors before as well, but with the signing of the Memorandum it's all been institutionalized in a way, now we know whom we need to address and when, and what we can expect to receive. It is of particular importance that we now have our own Action Plan, which gives us guidelines on conduct in the event of a fire, earthquake, or any other disaster, how to organize evacuation of students and what are the safest evacuation routes, where the safe assembly point is that we all need to reach as soon as possible, which in our case is the school playground which is sufficiently removed from the building and which has been designated as the safe place for this purpose“, says Amela Hadžić, elaborating on some details from the Plan that, following approval by the school board, will be presented to the other members of the Municipal Group and the school's teaching staff.

„Naturally, when you are working with children you always need to be prepared. Before, we were in contact with the fire-fighters, the police and the medical center, but working on this Project and

through the additional training we received as well as the contacts we developed, we now have an added focus on some possible disasters that we never thought could occur before, to be honest, and it is particularly important that now we have a response, we know what needs to be done, we have defined exit routes from classrooms and the building, from the gym, and all the other details that make a good quality plan“, explains Amela Hadžić.

She says that with the activities will not stop with the adoption of the Action Plan, and she hopes that the 'spirit of the Project' will take root and that they will continue with the activities in order to familiarize the staff and more importantly the students with it.

„We plan to pass on this knowledge to all the teaching staff, and our aim is to organize, in cooperation with other actors, regular – at least twice annually – rescue and evacuation exercises with children in order to make sure we have best possible response in these situations“, says Amela.

School Principal, Dragi Jovanović, has been fully supportive with everything and says that such a Project is of tremendous importance for any school, especially because the activities will not end with the finalization of the project.

„When it comes to our priorities they are, first of all, safety of students and employees, and then the educational process. Because, if you don't have the highest level of security - and with this we are approaching that ideal – than it is very difficult to produce the expected level of work. This is why we are especially grateful to 'Save the Children' for giving u the opportunity to participate in such a project“, says Dragi Jovanović.

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