
Peacebuilding for Bosnian Teachers

“My name is Emina Becic and I am 22 years old. I live in Sarajevo where I am a post-graduate student in the field of sociology. My area of interest is interfaith and intra-faith dialogues.

I have never associated religion and peace-making with each other. In my experience and education, religion has most often been connected with violence and conflicts. I have never known that faith could be the path toward peace. The realization that it can has been startling and life changing for me. Everything about my understanding of the world has changed.

At the beginning of the year I was introduced to the program called Little Steps. Every Saturday for three months, we would discuss different topics like faith, peace-building, interfaith dialogue, stereotypes, prejudice, cultural identities, and non-violence in communication. Through them, I have learned a lot about MCC and about how Little Steps is trying to follow their foot steps with our traditions.

For the first time in my life, I have connected my faith with peace and my academic work with activism. I have since decided to commit my time to working with religious teachers on developing peace-building education for children. In the last six months I have witnessed many different forms of peace-building. For example, I recently led a workshop with Islamic religious teachers on how to lead peace-building discussions in their classrooms.

One concept we taught which was new for the teachers was the idea that we can build a structure of violence prevention in our classrooms instead of always needing to discipline students for violent acts that have already been committed. It was a “light bulb” moment for the teachers to hear us explain that faith could serve as a mechanism for dealing with violence instead of causing violence. This is only one example of creativity in conflict transformation and it is truly rewarding.”



**Bosnian teachers
at a workshop**

Program Update

Global Family funds recently assisted in the translation and printing of a Peace-building textbook. This book promotes dialogue and peace between people of different faiths. The book will be widely distributed and will provide opportunities to “open” education worldwide. Already, there are contacts with several large Iraqi non-governmental organizations (MCC partners) who will be the first ones to receive and use the textbook. In this way, it is possible that a new generation of Muslims will receive peace-building education at an early age.

Global Family funds also assisted in a series of workshops on basic peace-building for religious teachers. At a recent workshop held in Zenica, 84 Islamic religious teachers participated in the seminar. The main topics included: constructively dealing with the desire for revenge through forgiveness and religious diversity (especially in light of the 1990's genocide), and discussions of individual perceptions of total truth and how this leads to conflict.

A very sensitive topic in Sarajevo these days is the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Everyone remembers the siege of Sarajevo and how their



own lives at that time relied on humanitarian aid. Having so recently experienced their own crisis, it is very easy for the Bosnians to experience re-traumatization and the crisis in Gaza has been felt deeply by Bosnians. Among the Bosnian people there exists a type of paranoia that someone somewhere is responsible for the suffering of all Muslims, that they are unable to do anything about it. Unfortunately, these are not the kinds of beliefs that lend themselves to peace dialogues.

A great accomplishment for Little Steps this year was that they managed to be included in the Ramadan TV program on TV Hayat. Never before has there been a non-Muslim as a guest on the Ramadan program. Little Steps successfully invited both an Islamic religious teacher and a well known Franciscan Priest, Ivo Markovic, to be on the program together.

The truly amazing part of this TV show is that it means that these interfaith dialogues can begin to happen in public spaces, and not just in the classroom. The Ramadan program was just one step to showing Bosnians that God is celebrated by many people in the world, not just by Muslims. For a society so recently embroiled in religious conflict, this is an important step to rebuilding faith in other people and to realizing that it is okay to have friends, colleagues and family members who are from another faith. This is an important tenet of society that many of us take for granted in our Western world. However, for the Bosnians, in the face of so much recent destruction, the rebuilding of this trust is a beautiful thing to behold.

Thank You!

Your generous contributions toward education costs through Global Family, allow participants in the Peacebuilding for Bosnian Teachers program to gain the knowledge and skills they need to promote peace in their classrooms.

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