

REGIONAL TECHNICAL SEMINAR ON ECO-DRR HELD IN NORTH MACEDONIA

From October 31 to November 3, JICA and Crisis Management Center (CMC) from North Macedonia jointly organized the 2nd seminar for the project “Ecosystem based Disaster Risk Reduction (ECO-DRR)” with the aim to present the results of the project to the neighboring countries, as the 6-year project will be completed by the end of November.

On the first day of the seminar, the Chief Advisor Mr. Inada presented the latest updates of the ongoing project in North Macedonia, followed by the presentations from Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia with the updates on their current activities of the respective ongoing projects related to natural disasters and ECO-DRR.

On November 2, a whole day field trip to Radovich municipality was organized for all the participants.

The last day of the seminar was a group practice and discussion on the lessons learned of the ECO-DRR project in North Macedonia and each of these four groups made a presentation on the ideas on what can be applied in their respective countries. The seminar was closed by the addresses of the project Chief Advisor Mr. Inada, Mr. Noda from JICA HQ and Dr. Stefanoski from CMC.

In the coming period, JICA is determined to continue the support of the countries in the region for tackling the challenges that these countries are facing due to the climate changes and the disasters that are occurring as the result of these changes.



Presentation at the seminar



Field trip to Radovich project site



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COOPERATION BETWEEN BIH AND JAPAN – EARLY FIRE DETECTION AND LANDSLIDE PREVENTION



Signing ceremony Mr. Kawaguchi Daiji, Team Leader for Detailed Planning Survey Team and Executive Technical Advisor to the Director General Global Environment Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency and Mr. Mladen Božović, The Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Within the project “Capacity Building for Disaster Risk Reduction – Eco DRR”, representatives of the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Japanese Agency for International Cooperation - JICA signed the document “Minutes of Meeting”. The project deals with early fire detection and the consolidation of forest soil naturally and landslide prevention.

The ceremony was also attended by representatives of the Federal Civil Protection Administration, the Republic Civil Protection Administration of the RS and the Public Security Department of the Brčko District of BiH, who will implement this project in cooperation with JICA.

KOSOVO

PLANTING OF TREES IN RESTLICE VILLAGE AS PART OF THE PROJECT NFFIS AND ECO-DRR IN KOSOVO



Tree planting in Kosovo

Within the “Project for Capacity Building for Risk Reduction through the National Forest Fire Information System and ECO-DRR” (NFFIS and ECO-DRR) in Restelice village it was organized “Arbor Day” to initiate the new planting in

2023, where residents and other relevant institutions participated. ECO- Group was established by the Project with the pupils of Restelice school to raise public awareness and promote the preservation of forests. Pupils of Restelice village planted their trees, promoting afforestation and prevention of any avalanche occurrence in the future.

The Project has designed windbreak forest activities in the Municipality of Istog where severe strong winds are a threat to the life and property of citizens of Istog. The target areas of the Project this year are three schools in the city of Istog where planting activities will commence soon.

MONTENEGRO

NFFIS ACTIVITIES IN ULCINJ AND KOLASIN

In Montenegro JICA Expert team conducted density control operations in the Pine Forest of Long Beach in Ulcinj. By making plots across the forest, JET was able to measure the density control of the forest - wooden mass volume, growth and the average height of the trees. Activities are also being implemented in Kolasin for post-fire restoration of the forests.

SERBIA

ALUMNI SERBIA AND JICA BALKAN OFFICE HOSTED REGIONAL ALUMNI MEETING IN BELGRADE

Ms. Aleksandra Vucinic, President of Alumni Serbia

This year, our association JICA Alumni Serbia had the honor of hosting colleagues from other Alumni associations at the Regional meeting that took place in Belgrade on September 21 and 22. The meeting was an opportunity for each association to present its activities in the previous year, as well as plans for the ongoing 2023 fiscal year. In addition to presentations by Alumni representatives, we also had the opportunity to learn from JICA office representatives how to improve the application process for courses in Japan, how to further encourage cooperation among Alumni associations, while the criteria and good examples of Small-scale Follow-up projects were presented as well. In addition to the official part of the meeting, during the breaks we also had the opportunity to socialize, which is very important for the development of further ideas for cooperation.

JICA Alumni Serbia will have two new activities in the fiscal year 2023, one is “Karate for All” which aims to have children with special needs participate in sports activities as an important element for their inclusion, and the second activity relates to maintaining workshops in the Nis Science and Technology Park on the topic of energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources under the title “Residential Communities as Buyer-Producer of Electricity”. Also, in December 2023, we will host representatives of JICA Alumni Macedonia. The purpose of the visit is the implementation of the circular economy, and as part of this study visit, meetings will be held with the Ministry of En-



Presentation on JICA's cooperation in Western Balkans

vironmental Protection, the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia and the visit to the laboratory for energy efficiency, located at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, will be also organized.



Alumni Regional meeting in September 2023

SFU SELECTION AND INTRODUCTION OF THE PROPOSALS

On June 29, the announcement for this year's Small-scale Follow-up competition was shared with the Alumni association from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The ex-participants of JICA KCCP and the member of Alumni had almost 3 months to prepare and submit the application for their small follow-up project which would be implemented by April 2024. Balkan Office received 4 applications by September 20, and selected 3 for financing this fiscal year. The project proposal for Serbia is related to energy efficiency and will be implemented in Nis, the project from North Macedonia is in the waste management education sector, while the BiH proposal is in tourism promotion sector and will be implemented in Brcko District.

Voice of the SFU applicant, Ms. Marica Markoljevic, Senior Expert Associate for Tourism Development in Tourist Organization of Brcko District of BiH:

"After evaluation this year in October, the Small-scale follow-up project "Design and produce original souvenirs of Brcko District

of Bosnia and Herzegovina" was selected by JICA Balkan office to be implemented by Tourist Organization of Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main goal of the project is to design and produce hand-made original souvenirs of the Brcko District which would contribute to the recognition of the district as a sustainable destination. The project will be implemented starting from November 2023 and promoted in January 2024. The

project will be to be implemented between November 2023 and January 2023.

"The idea of the project is to celebrate the district's rich cultural and historical heritage while creating economic opportunities for local artisans and entrepreneurs. Through a thoughtful and creative approach, the project would seek how to leave a lasting impression on tourists and contribute to Brcko District's sustainable tourism development."



Ms. Markoljevic giving a presentation.

JAPAN CULTURE DAY IN ZLATIBOR BY MS. SAKAI, JOCV

On September 1, the event "Japan Culture Day" was held in Zlatibor for the first time. This event was initiated by Ms. Takako SAKAI, Volunteer from Japan, together with Zlatibor tourism organization.

"It was a good opportunity for the residents of Zlatibor and tourists to learn about Japanese culture. Zlatibor is one of Serbia's prominent mountain resorts, and the number of visitors from overseas, including Asia, has increased in recent years. However, there is still little knowledge about the Asian culture, so the event was planned and organized with the support from JICA Balkan office and the Embassy of Japan.

The event included Japanese cultural workshops by JICA volunteers such as Origami, Japanese calligraphy, Matcha and Daifuku tasting, and Yukata dressing. After the workshops, seminars on "Japanese tourism" and "Japanese manga culture" were also held. The organizers also introduced Japanese music and musical instruments, daily items, magazines, cooking recipes etc. Additionally, there was a section for footbath (Ashiyu) and a Japanese movie was played at the theater.

It was a great opportunity to work together with the colleagues at tourism organization and thanks to everyone's contribution, many people, from children to adults, came to the event on that day. There were also tourism-related stakeholders. I hoped this experience will provide better understanding of Japanese culture, and at the same time, it would be a great event to promote this destination to the international tourists as well." Ms. Sakai said.



Ms. Sakai (first from the right) with the organizers



Japan Culture Day in Zlatibor

CLOSING CEREMONY AND ROUND TABLE ON COMPETITIVENESS AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF SMES IN BIH

On September 8, the round table and course certificates award ceremony was held at the premises of the School of Economics and Business of the University of Sarajevo, as part of the project “Supporting the development of the institutional and business capacity for the work of small and medium-sized enterprises in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path of European integration – Competitiveness and Quality Management of SMEs in Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

In partnership with JICA, the project was

supported by the Embassies of Japan and Bulgaria in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project was funded by the Bulgarian Development Assistance Agency (BDA) - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Bulgaria, and the implementor of the project of the University of National and World Economy (UNWE), Sofia, Bulgaria and Economic Institute in Sarajevo.

Munira Šestić, SEBS Project Coordinator welcomed the participants and the students

who attended the course. Mr. OMORI Yuichiro, Second Secretary, Head of Economic Cooperation Section, Embassy of Japan in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mr. FUKUDA Hajime, Representative of JICA Balkan office shortly addressed the participants of the event.

General conclusion of the round table is that it is necessary to strengthen and further continue partnerships between business and academic community as well as to exchange lessons learned and best practices.



Mr. Fukuda, JICA Balkan Office addressing the attendees.

SERBIA

INTRODUCTION OF A NEW SENIOR VOLUNTEER AT “NASA KUĆA”, MR. TAKEBUCHI

“Drago mi je. My name is Izumi Takebuchi. Three months have passed since I came to Serbia from Tokyo, Japan. I have been working with people with disabilities for a long time. When I worked at the welfare workshop, I taught work skills and business manners. When I worked at the special needs school, I taught language, math and work study. I am currently working as a volunteer for the NGO Naša kuća, which helps people with disabilities. My first impression of Belgrade is that there are many parks and nature. And I love the parks and cafes where families and friends enjoy chatting with each other. The users of Naša kuća are also very friendly and

my colleagues are always helpful. My activity is to support people with disabilities to improve the work they can do and to improve their working environment. At the workshop, they are making recycled paper from empty cigarette boxes. I believe that this recycling work is valuable for a sustainable society. The workshop also makes chocolate to order. They also plan to start hydroponics and meal delivery. I will continue to work with them towards the development of this business. Thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation in supporting the activities of Nasa Kuća in Serbia.”

Mr. Takebuchi



Mr. Takebuchi with his colleagues at Nasa Kuća

SERBIA

INTRODUCTION OF A NEW JOCV IN SREMSKI KARLOVCI, MR. OGUCHI

“Nice to meet you, I’m Kaio Oguchi. I arrived in Serbia in October 2023 and I’m working at Sremski Karlovci Grammar School as a Japanese teacher. I’m delighted to be working at this beautiful school. My responsibilities include supporting Japanese classes and introducing Japanese culture to the students. I’m eager to collaborate with my colleagues to enhance the students’ Japanese language skills.”

Mr. Oguchi



Mr. Oguchi in Sremski Karlovci Grammar School

FAREWELL MESSAGE BY MR. TANAKA, JOCV IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KNIC

It has been a very valuable experience for me to work with Serbian people and to reflect on myself.

My dispatch was postponed by COVID-19, but finally when I arrived, I got a warm welcome and support from my colleagues. Those 2 years have passed like an arrow. I worked at Serbian countryside municipality office of Knic, surrounded by rich nature. Through this experience, I was able to broaden my insights.

My volunteer activities consisted of improving the administrative system and increasing efficiency.

It was very challenging for me to do these jobs cause of cultural and political idea differences. My activities in Serbia were small scale ones and had some limitations. However, I could introduce my host institution to a Japanese company which researched about Serbian agriculture.

I would like to thank everyone for their kind support. “Hvala vam i vidimo se”.

Mr. Tanaka



Mr. Tanaka with his colleagues in Knic municipality

MS. AMI SASAKI ON-JOB-TRAINEE FROM JICA HQ

Hello, my name is Ami Sasaki, JICA officer working in JICA Balkan office as an On-the-Job Trainee from September to December 2023 originally from JICA HQ department in charge of Western Balkans. Although it has only been a month since my arrival, I am already in love with the warm, talkative personalities of the people in this region.

The purpose of my training is to see how JICA cooperation is implemented on the ground. I have observed some JICA projects in this region so far, and I found that everyone in the projects is working with a strong desire to improve their countries through the projects, and some of them have been cooperating with JICA projects for 10 or 20 years, for which I am very grateful for.

I have learned how Technical Cooperation can create a value for the country. In one JICA project, JICA expert told me that the implementing agency had expensive equipment but left it unused till the project started, because they did not know how to use it. JICA experts repaired the equipment and showed how to use it hands-on, and now they can utilize it professionally. I thought this was the kind of value that can be created through technical cooperation conducted by a JICA expert: not just giving them a fish, not just handing them a fishing rod, but teaching them how to catch fish using a fishing rod. Now I believe that JICA can create great impact with those with strong will in the region, by accompanying and empowering them.



Ms. Sasaki on Sava river

FROM JICA BALKAN OFFICE

NEW STAFF AT THE OFFICE, MS. SONJA SKAREP, PROGRAM OFFICER AT JICA BALKAN OFFICE

Hello everyone, I am happy to be back in JICA Balkan Office. My name is Sonja Skarep, newly appointed national staff as a successor of Ms. Irena Popovic, in charge for ODA Loan projects and project operation in Montenegro.

My previous work experience in different international organizations was mainly oriented towards developing, coordinating and monitoring of various national and regional projects aimed to contribute to democratization and increasing institutional capacities in the Western Balkan countries.

I have started my cooperation with JICA in 2017 as a project officer in the technical cooperation for improvement of the national program for early detection of breast cancer. After completion of the project, I had the opportunity to work in JICA Balkan Office. Over the past year, I was assigned to the Project "Strengthening and Expanding the Mentoring Service for SMEs in the Western Balkans".

In the spring of 2023, I visited Japan for the first time. I was impressed by the rich culture, philosophy of living, and very kind people who are willing to help tourists on every step. Not only will they show you the way on the map, but they will even take to the place you are looking for.

I believe in universal human values that connect people. If we are open enough to accept the differences that are coming from our cultures, professions, nationalities, and to understand each other even if we don't speak the same languages, we can certainly find beauty everywhere.

I am spending free time with my son and attending aikido classes.



Ms. Sonja Skarep



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