

FIRST REGIONAL SEMINAR ON ECOSYSTEM-BASED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (ECO-DRR) HELD IN SKOPJE

On October 30, the first regional Eco-DRR seminar was held in Skopje. The seminar was officially opened by H.E. Keiko Haneda, Ambassador of Japan, Mr. Agron Buxhaku, the Director of Crisis Management Center, and Mr. Zoran Gjorgiev, the Director of Public Enterprise “National Forests”.

ECO DRR promotes sustainable management and conservation of ecosystems to reduce disaster risk aiming at sustainable and resilient development.

At the seminar, the project team explained that they installed forest monitoring plots in the pilot site Radovich Mountain to collect data on how terracing and tree plantation could prevent flood, landslide soil erosion and forest fire. Tree planting, in this pilot site, will begin after the data collection.



Regional Seminar on Eco-DRR in Skopje

This seminar was an opportunity to share practice and progress of the ECO DRR model with the relevant institutions from Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.

DATA COLLECTION MISSION FOR THE “PROJECT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL FOREST FIRE INFORMATION SYSTEM” IN MONTENEGRO

Following the example of technical cooperation between North Macedonia and Japan, in the field of emergency management, the Government of Montenegro also applied for the Technical Cooperation “Project for Development of National Forest Fire Information System”.

The initial data collection mission was sent at the beginning of November 2019. After numerous meetings with the relevant parties, the expert from Japan, Mr. NAKATA Hiroshi,

also visited the two sites, mostly affected by the fires within the last decade – the towns of Niksic, Tivat and Ulcinj.

The future implementation of this project will largely contribute to strengthening technical capacities and capabilities of emergency management in Montenegro and, on a long-term basis, the risk of forest fires will be significantly reduced. The second mission for project formulation is planned for February 2020.



Mr. Nakata during site visit in Lustica accompanied by a representative of the Directorate for Emergency Management, Montenegro and a firefighter from Tivat



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ENHANCING SELF-RELIANCE OF THE PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN BELGRADE CITY

On September 30, representatives of the JICA Balkan Office, Social Welfare Corporation Ikoma Fukushi-Kai, from Japan, and Nasa Kuca, the Association supporting persons with developmental disabilities from

Belgrade, signed the Memorandum for implementation of the “Project for Enhancing Self-Reliance for Persons with Intellectual Disability in Belgrade city”. Through this project, “Nasa Kuca”, with the facilities located in Zvezdara

(Belgrade city), will implement an appropriate daytime program adopting waste paper recycling activities to meet each service users’ characteristics. Project has started since January 2020 and will last for two years.



Signing the Memorandum for Implementation of the Project

ALL TOGETHER IN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT IN PANCEVO

On October 1, the Memorandum for implementation of the project for “Environmental Improvement in Pancevo”, through the collaborations among Academia, Government, Industry and Citizens, was signed in the city of Pancevo. The Project will be jointly implemented by The Hyogo Environmental Advancement Association (Japan), University of Belgrade—Faculty of Chemistry and the City of Pancevo, with the support of JICA.

All stakeholders will work together to investigate environmental pollution in Pancevo, as well as to find possible solutions. Training for environmental measurement, analysis, pollution prevention and management will be integral part of the project that will help Serbia to manage pollution in the best way.

The Project has started since January 2020.



Signing the Memorandum for implementation

ARRIVAL OF THREE NEW JICA VOLUNTEERS



Ms. Yokoi, Ms. Oishi and Mr. Shimomura (from left to right)

On July 23, three JICA Volunteers arrived in Serbia. After one-month of intensive Serbian language lessons in Belgrade, they moved to their host organizations in Ub,

Kraljevo and Jagodina.

Ms. Koharu Oishi is dispatched to the Municipality of Ub, Disaster management department. With the experience in rescue activities

as a firefighter from Fukuoka prefecture, she is transferring knowledge to the members of the civil protection department. Additionally, she is working on the preparation for evacuation drills for children in primary schools.

Mr. Kazuma Shimomura is a volunteer in the Municipality of Kraljevo, Disaster management department. Mr. Shimomura, a police officer from Saitama prefecture, helps the local government by presenting experience gained in Emergency Rescue Unit in Japan. He is also engaged in the preparation for evacuation drills for children in primary schools.

Ms. Yui Yokoi is dispatched to the School with a dormitory for students with hearing and speech impairments "11th May" in Jagodina. Having worked as a teacher for a special school in Tottori prefecture, she will transfer knowledge and experience from Japan related to work with children with disabilities, mostly children with autism.

Serbia is currently the only country in Europe where JICA volunteers are dispatched. There are six JICA volunteers in Serbia as of December 2019.

BELGRADE SPORTS ASSOCIATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AWARDED WITH "HEROES OF BELGRADE MARATHON"

Belgrade Sports Association for the Persons with Disabilities, where Mr. Yuya Miyagi (JICA Volunteer) works, was awarded "Heroes of the Belgrade Marathon" on June 13 at Stari Dvor in Belgrade.

The award is given to those who participated in the marathon despite their challenges. Mr. Miyagi was one of the staff supporting the persons in wheelchair, who took part in half marathon.



Mr. Miyagi, supporting one of the Marathon participants



At the Award Ceremony at Stari Dvor in Belgrade

AIR QUALITY MONITORING DISPLAYS INSTALLED IN PRISHTINA

On October 25, hand-over ceremony of Air Quality Monitoring Displays was held in front of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning building. The ceremony was attended by H. E. Mr. Fatmir Matoshi, the Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning, and Mr. TAKEICHI Jiro, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office, among others.

The Air Quality Monitoring Displays are installed in four locations in Pristina as part of JICA's "The Capacity Development Project for Air Pollution Control". In addition to showing the air pollution level to the citizens of Pristina, these monitors will also raise awareness about the importance of healthy environment. Additionally, the monitors will present the Air Quality Index, specified by EU rules, on a daily basis. The data shown on the displays will be transmitted from the Air Quality Monitoring Stations in Pristina, which have been rehabilitated by the Project.

The Project aims to develop the capacity of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial

Planning (MESP), Kosovo Hydro Meteorology Institute (KHMI) and other relevant institu-

tions in air pollution control and air quality management.



Mr. Matoshi and Mr. Takeichi at the Hand-over ceremony

THIRD COUNTRY TRAINING PROGRAM ON FOOD SAFETY CONTROL FOR KOSOVO HELD IN JORDAN

From October 13 to 24, 13 employees of Kosovo Food and Veterinary Agency (KFVA) participated in Third Country Training Program (TCTP) in Jordan, organized in cooperation with the University of Jordan, School of Agriculture (UoJ) and JICA. The overall aim of the program is to strengthen KFVA's technical capacity for food safety control.

This year's course, entitled "Audit, inspection and monitoring of hygiene require-

ments and HACCP system in Food Organizations", was conducted to create a group of trainers for food safety control measures especially focusing on auditing HACCP implementation in Kosovo. Thus, training of the trainers is of a great importance since trainers are significant source of spreading information.

Enhancing the food safety control capacity is stated as one of the priorities of Kosovo's

government that aims at becoming an EU member state, hence to align its food safety control level with EU standards.

In January 2020, professor from the University of Jordan visited KFVA to organize a follow up seminar and support KFVA participants to become reliable trainers to their junior colleagues. The third year of the training is planned to be held in October 2020.



Training participants at a laboratory

SEMINAR ON DATA COLLECTION SURVEY ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT HELD IN SARAJEVO

On June 26, an interim debriefing seminar on “Collection of data on public transport in Sarajevo Canton” was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Topics of the debriefing session included survey results on public transport (tram, trolley bus, route bus), operation systems, transport management, current conditions of routes, user status etc. The audience also had an opportunity to learn more about the case study of the West Japan Railway public transport system.

The attendees of the seminar were officials from the public transport sector, private sector, local government, aid agencies and transport authorities in Sarajevo. Seminar was followed by a panel discussion about the current condition and future plans for public transport in Sarajevo.

The survey was conducted as a part of the project “Development of Public Urban Transport Aimed at Enhancing the Mobility of the population and Reducing Air pollution in Canton Sarajevo”.



Attendees at the Seminar

SEMINAR FOR PE TEACHERS HELD AT DZEMAL BJEDIC UNIVERSITY IN MOSTAR

On August 29, Seminar for Physical Education (PE) teachers was organized at the Teachers Faculty of the University Dzemal Bjedic of Mostar, as a part of JICA Project, in collaboration with Sports Association of the City of Mostar and the Herzegovina-Neretva canton (HNC) Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

About 50 PE teachers, both from primary and secondary schools from HNC participated in the seminar. Professor Adnan Dzumhur gave a lecture on “Similarities and Differences of PE in Japan and Bosnia and Herzegovina” through which he shared his knowledge and experience gained at the educational training he attended in Japan.

After that, ER team from Mostar City Health Center conducted a practical lecture on first aid. By using cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) manikins for chest compression and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, teachers learned how to deliver first aid properly.

On this occasion, the Project provided CPR manikins to 50 primary schools in HNC and the equipment will be used for the training of teachers and students at schools.



Hand-over of the equipment for the trainings on First Aid

SHARING EXPERIENCE FROM JAPAN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Sharing experience from the training course in Japan

On September 5, Mr. Nenad Lizdek, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, made a presentation for his colleagues on his experience from the training on “Capacity Development for In-

vestment Promotion” in Kobe, Japan, from June to July.

Mr. Lizdek emphasized that he learned a lot from Japanese professors he had met during the program, and also from the observation of Japanese way of doing business. He also talked about what he had learned during the Study visit to Nagoya – Noritake Garden

and Toyota, and encouraged his colleagues to apply for KCCP in the future.

The training course in Japan is a part of JICA KCCP. It is open to the officials from developing countries and provides technical knowledge and practical solutions for development issues.



Mr. Lizdek holding a presentation for his colleagues

ALUMNI THEMATIC SEMINAR HELD IN NORTH MACEDONIA

On Nov 7, MAK-JAMS, JICA Alumni association in North Macedonia, organized a thematic seminar on the topic: Integrated Lake, River and Coastal Management for Sustainable Use and Preservation of Water Resources. The speaker was Mr. Todorce Spasov, a JICA Alumni who participated in JICA Knowledge Co-Creation Program (KCCP) on the same topic this year. The seminar was attended by more than 30 alumni members, and its purpose was to disseminate the knowledge gained in Japan and to identify possibilities for future implementation in North Macedonia. The first step towards this goal has already been achieved with the visit of representatives from Japan to the water treatment facility in Radovish.



Opening Speech by MAK-JAMS' President at the Thematic Seminar

POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA LEARN HOW TO PRODUCE DIGITAL MAPPING

On May 22 and 23, JICA and the State Authority for Geospatial Information (ASIG) organized a training session for the students of the Faculty of Civil Engineering from the Polytechnic University of Tirana.

As a part of the “Project on Geospatial Information and Sustainable Land Development in Tirana-Durres Area”, Japa-

nese experts, together with 10 ASIG staff trained in Japan, instructed the students on how to produce digital topographic mapping.

The training, took place in the Head Office of ASIG, and it was supported by H.E. Mr. ITO Makoto, Ambassador of Japan to Albania, Mr. KOBAYASHI Hideya, Chief

Representative of JICA Balkan Office as well as Mr. Lorenc Çala, Director General of ASIG.

At the end of the event, there was a handing over ceremony of the equipment and software, donated to ASIG. The complete digital topographic maps are expected to be released in April 2020.



At the training session at the Faculty of Civil Engineering, Polytechnic University of Tirana

PROGRESS OF THE PROJECT ON SMALLHOLDER FAMILIES' FINANCIAL INCLUSION

JICA technical cooperation, Smallholder Families' Financial Inclusion Project, aims to expand the financial inclusion of smallholder families by improving the use of financial products and non-financial services. This four-year project, incepted in October 2017, has entered the second phase as of September 2019.

With an aim to build the capacity to provide non-financial services to local farmers,

the project is assisting to establish 'Agri-Knowledge Center'. The center is envisioned to provide numerous training programs on agricultural technique and workshops, as well as to enable the farmers' access to primary information in farming and selling the produce. The launching event of this platform is planned in April.

These abovementioned works are leveraged by more efficient and capable core

banking system in the headquarters and 63 branch offices. The project went into contract in December 2018 to renew both software and hardware. The goods provided includes 210 PCs, 43 firewalls, servers, various software licenses and thorough training on user acceptance. The new system will be able to offer utility payment service and handle a variety of farmers' requests.

INTRODUCING NEW JAPANESE STAFF

Zdravo! My name is TABATA Yoshiaki and I started working at JICA Balkan office in October 2019 as Project Formulation Advisor in charge of ODA loan projects. Before coming to Serbia, I worked in the Post-Soviet states like Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, so this is my very first experience working outside the Post-Soviet states and I am very excited. I have already got used to my life in Belgrade and been enjoying it very much.

ODA loan projects support the countries by providing low-interest, long-term and concessional funds to finance their development efforts with economic and social infrastructure. Moreover, ODA loans are the financial assistance with repayment obligation, so they place a small fiscal burden on the Japanese side as well, therefore, I think that ODA loans are one of the very sustainable instruments.

In Balkan countries, so far, the agreements on eight loan projects have been signed with the particular focus on environment and water sectors, and these projects have been contributing to the socio-economic development in the area. My main duty is to facilitate the loan projects by assisting the stakeholders both on the pre-implementation and implementation stages.



Mr. TABATA Yoshiaki (right)

GREETING FROM THE NEW CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE

In 2018, Japanese Prime Minister ABE Shinzo presented the Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative that comprises 3 items as below.

- 1) Promoting dialogue by appointing the Ambassador in charge of the Western Balkans at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 2) Dispatching JICA survey team to uncover new cooperation projects
- 3) Holding seminars in order to promote regional cooperation

Under the initiative, JICA Balkan office implements not only bilateral cooperation projects, but also promoting regional cooperation among the countries in western Balkan especially in the sector of environment protection, disaster risk reduction, private sector development and peace consolidation.

Japan cares much about the stability and development of the Western Balkan countries and I believe that Japan, with vast experience for development assistance in whole world, can play a very important role in tackling those challenges in this region.

To support socioeconomic reforms in the Western Balkan countries, which are aiming at EU accession, JICA, as the Japanese Government agency responsible for implementation of ODA through technical cooperation, concessional loan and grant aid, will be continuously looking into developing needs of this region and seeking possibilities for future cooperation as further friendship among the countries and Japan.



Mr. TAKEICHI Jiro, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office

NATIONAL STAFF OF JICA UKRAINE FIELD OFFICE VISITS BALKAN OFFICE

Ms. Aliona Tkach, national staff of JICA Ukraine Field Office visited Balkan Office from November 17 to 21.

The purpose of her visit was exchanging experiences and practices with the national staff of Balkan office and sharing new ideas on how to improve the daily work related to KCCP, Alumni organizations, PR activities and Volunteer program.

During her stay, Ms. Aliona had an opportunity to learn more about JICA Volunteer Program in Serbia, by visiting the counterpart institutions where the volunteers from Japan are working. She also visited JICA's counterpart institution in Serbia, the Ministry of EU

integration, where she learned more about the long-lasting cooperation between the Governments of Serbia and Japan.



Ms. Tkach visiting Nasa Kuca and Ms. Nishinaka (JICA Volunteer)