Dear collaborators and Step by Step Foundation friends,

Step by Step Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives has celebrated yet another important anniversary: 15 years of work. Step by Step Foundation was transformed into an independent non-governmental organization in order to continue its mission: to prepare and implement programs that will enable children fully develop their potentials and to support democratic processes in the education of children, youth and adults. We believe that education is a key to million opportunities and that we should all take steps to a quality education for everyone, because it is quality education only that can lead to quality changes. Therefore our new moto is: Education and professional development for better future.

Suzana Kirandziska,
executive manager of Step by Step Foundation

The entire speech of Step by Step Foundation executive director can be read here.

A simple click on one of the titles below will take you directly to the selected content you would like to read first!
Early Literacy and Numeracy Study conducted

From 9-31 May, 2016, a research of literacy and numeracy skills was conducted with a sample of 8,000 second and third graders from all primary schools in the Republic of Macedonia, in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish language of instruction.

A total of 744 school representatives (school pedagogues, psychologists and early-grade teachers), who were previously trained to use the standard assessment tools with the help of tablet computer, conducted the research. Literacy and numeracy assessment tools, EGRA and EGMA, are adapted to the local context and the curricula in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish by local practitioners and experts in early literacy and numeracy.

“EGRA and EGMA are simple instruments that can be used by every teacher as a part of the teaching process. The recently conducted study shows that at the end of the third grade there are some students who have not yet learned reading and basic numeracy, and have difficulties in subtraction, multiplication and division”, Tanja Andonova Mitrevska, advisor for standards and exams at the National Examinations Center.

After the piloting of the assessment instruments in 2013, the research was carried out on a selected number of students in the past two years. The baseline study in 42 primary schools was conducted in May, 2014, and the study report is available here. In May, 2015, the study was conducted in 103 primary schools and the report of the study is available here.

The study results will be shared with the schools and the relevant institutions in order to find ways to improve the curriculums and the teaching process, which would result in improved literacy and numeracy skills of the students. One of the aims of USAID Readers are Leaders Project is, based on the study results, to set reading standards in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish language of instruction, as well as numeracy standards for second and third graders, which will enable teachers to monitor continually their students’ achievements.
Math+ in Hristijan Todorovski – Karposh primary school, Dragomance, Staro Nagorichane

Doing math sums is often a real challenge for the students. In order to support creative thinking and to motivate the students, teachers should use techniques and strategies which will make math interesting and game. This is the reason USAID Readers are Leaders Project created Math+ training, which was conducted for teachers and other professionals from 65 schools in the country in March and April.

Most of the trainings were organized in two schools simultaneously to support exchange of experience among the teachers from the same schools and between the schools. Numeracy+ trainings enable the participants:

- to become familiar with teaching techniques and production of didactic materials that can be used in teaching math in the early grades;
- to become familiar with techniques that will help them teach contents that students need more support for;
- to enhance their professional competencies for using techniques for teaching math through games.
The lower grade primary school teachers from “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” in Sveti Nikola and school “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” in Kochani believe they have learned many techniques and strategies that have a goal to develop the logical thinking of the students and to enrich their functional knowledge and that the learned will be used in the teaching and learning process. Also they believe that the techniques to which they have been introduced in the training will be easily adjusted and used for learning various math contents in every grade.

The lower grade primary school teachers from the school “Strasho Pindzur” in Vevchani believe that they have learned teaching strategies and techniques that encourage curiosity, research, critical thinking and cooperation.

Using these techniques by the teachers will help students get to like math, see the connection of what they have learned to the real life and acquire knowledge and skills that are a basis for life-long learning.
NETWORKING EVENTS FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At the end of the first circle of the learning communities work, in April, a total of 14 networking events in several locations were organized for 40 schools from the USAID Readers are Leaders Project. During these interesting and celebrating, yet working events, about 500 teachers presented developmental activities they had worked on throughout the year, using poster presentations, whereas the school coordinators presented learning communities as the core of cooperation in their schools. The event hosts were the mentors from the learning communities, and the guests included directors, mayors and other representatives from the communities, parents, media and others who are interested in the teachers’ individual engagement for improving literacy and numeracy of the students they teach.

Throughout the events teachers got to know each other better through games, had time to look carefully at their colleagues’ posters and to ask them about their achievement, as well as about the difficulties they had implementing the activities they acquired in the project trainings. However, the trainings were not the only teaching resource for their unique developmental activity: the events enabled them to synthetize their knowledge and skills during the numerous trainings and workshops they attended and to create and implement changes in the teaching practice that address the specific context they work in and the students they teach.
At the end of each networking event the teachers had time to discuss and reflect the things they have learned about themselves and about their work, after the event and at the end of the school year.

Here are some of their comments:

“What I liked the most about the project is the opportunity to consult the colleagues.”

“As I work, I sometimes wonder... Am I on the right track? Cooperating with my colleagues and networking proved me right!”

a lower-grade teacher from Kiril and Metodij primary school in Bitola

“At the beginning we had some doubts... We thought: not another project?! But now it is obvious that it had its purpose, it rounded a story.”

Kocho Racin primary school in Ivanjewci
USAID Readers are Leaders Project has provided e-collection of lesson plans prepared by the teachers who responded the Project open call and which involve picture books from “Our first Library” collection of picture books. If you are willing to integrate the picture books in lessons, the collection offers:

- lesson plans
- comprehension tests
- techniques for monitoring of students’ progress

The e-collection of lesson plans is available at Microsoft OneNote and you can approach it [HERE](#) or through the Step by Step Foundation [digital library](#).

The e-collection should encourage you to implement the picture books USAID Readers are Leaders Project has prepared, to adapt and implement the offered lesson plans, and to share your plans as well, in order to enrich the collection with new successful examples from your everyday practice.

**TEACHERS AND PARENTS AS PICTURE BOOKS AUTHORS**

In April and May, creative workshop for picture books was held in 22 primary schools. These workshops are a good opportunity for teachers and parents to cooperate in the creative process, while making picture books using easily available materials and simple techniques. Thus, we will enrich the selection of picture books for children, which can be used in teaching in the classroom or at home. The teachers and parents who took part in the workshops are encouraged to share the new techniques with the other colleagues and parents.
USAID Readers are leaders Project opens a call for sharing successful experiences and activities in the field of literacy and numeracy for early-grade students. The aim of the call is to collect relevant, positive experiences of the ones who are involved in the education of the youngest students, both at school and at home. The call is available in Macedonian and Albanian language, and you can access it HERE.

THE CALL FOR SUCCESSFUL EARLY LITERACY PRACTICES OPEN UNTIL JUNE 30

Would you like USAID Readers are Leaders Project Magic Literacy Van in your school or local community in July or August? This is a great opportunity to raise the interest of the youngest students to read and learn through the summer.

The Mobile Library offers:

- books for children
- audio-digital picture books
- reading corner
- math games

If you want us to visit your local community, you should contact us on: 02/3077-900 or ana@stepbystep.org.mk to suggest the date and the location for the visit and to leave other necessary information. The Mobile Library will bring picture books and joy in your neighborhood.

For additional questions regarding the activities of the USAID Readers are Leaders Project, please contact Ana Dimovska, Information and Communication Officer, through e-mail: ana@stepbystep.org.mk or cell: 072/307-321.
PROJECT FOR ROMA EMPOWERMENT AND AWARENESS FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH EDUCATION

OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE PROJECT

The official opening of the project on the premises of the Center for Social Initiatives - Nadez in Shuto Orizari, on 17th May, was attended and welcomed with the speeches of: the representative of the European Union Delegation in Skopje, Mr. Nafi Sarachini, Program Manager, Ms. Suzana Kirandziska, Executive Director of the Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives, the Director of the Center for Development and Improvement of Minority Language Communities Education, Mr. Redzep Ali Chupi and the Director of Braka Ramiz Hamid primary school, Mr. Ekrem Jashar. The event was also attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, 8th March kindergarten, Shaip Jusuf secondary school, non-governmental organizations, media, as well as children and women who are direct beneficiaries. The children from Nadez Center had a short program in Macedonian and Roma language, after which the guests were introduced to some of the project activities like: creative workshop for children and mothers, reading corner on the topic of stereotypes and a “Theater of Shadows”.

WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND MOTHERS

In the past period, the Center for Educational Support - Dendo Vas in Gjorche Petrov and the Center for Social Initiatives - Nadez in Shuto Orizari organized a number of workshops for Roma girls and women. Experts in the field of medical care, education and social protection and care held six workshops on the following topics:

- Maintaining hygiene of the home and personal hygiene;
- Medical problems in women, with a highlight on prevention and early detection of diseases and cancer;
- The process of enrollment in the first grade, the parents’ role and duties in the educational process of their children;
- Contagious disease prevention;
- Medical and psychological problems in adolescent girls.
A total of 24 workshops were organized in the past three months in order to improve mothers' skills to support their children's education through developing creativity and becoming familiar with demands of the school curriculum. It is extremely important to mention that the creative workshops integrate curriculum goals, planned for the development of numeracy, literacy and storytelling culture, as well as for expanding the knowledge in the field of natural and social sciences.

At the same time, two reading clubs were established, attended by girls and women who want to expand their reading skills and habits. May program focused on reading Roma legends and folk stories, and discussions about the dangers of stereotypes and how we cope with them. In the summer period, the Reading Club will work on the curriculum books for eighth and ninth grade, and on the list of assigned books for additional reading. All the girls who are interested in reading are welcome to join.

For more information regarding the Project for Roma Empowerment and Awareness for Democracy through Education, contact Elena Mishik, Project Manager, through e-mail: elena@stepbystep.org.mk or visit the website of the EU Delegation in Macedonia.
Short informative presentations of the project products were held for the representatives of the primary and secondary schools from 10-12, May. The participants were introduced to the contents and the form of:

- Teacher Core Professional Competences and Standards
- Student Support Staff Core Professional Competences and Standards
- Professional Competences for Primary and Secondary School Directors
- Guideline on the Manner and Form of Providing Mentoring Support to Novice Teachers and Novice Student Support Staff in Primary and Secondary Schools
- From Novice Teacher to Teacher Mentor - Guide for Professional and Career Development of Teachers is Primary and Secondary Schools;
- From Novice Student Support Staff to Student Support Staff Mentor – Guide for Professional and Career Development of Student Support Staff in Primary and Secondary Schools
- Manual on Performance Monitoring and Professional Development Planning for Teachers and Student Support Staff in Primary and Secondary Schools

Furthermore, the participants were introduced to the solutions for career promotions.
TRAINING FOR THE CAREER PROMOTION COMMISSION

Training for the representatives of the institutions, which according to the law, will comprise the Commission for Professional Promotion was held in April. In accordance to the suggested solutions, the commission ranks the professional development and is in charge of comprising a list of the candidates.

ADVISOR TRAININGS

In April and May trainings for the advisors from the Bureau for Development of Education and the Vocational and Educational Training Center were held, in order to introduce them to the Report for the Expert Insight in Meeting the Professional Standards for a Teacher – Mentor. The advisors from the Bureau and the Center were trainers, and the participants discussed ranking criteria through pilot ranking of a portfolio.

* The main implementer of the USAID Teacher Professional and Career Development Project is the Macedonian Civic Education Center. The Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives “Step by Step” is a partner-organization in the implementation of activities under the Teacher Competences Component.

More information about the contents or the form of the basic professional competencies and standards can be obtained from the BDE or VETC advisors for your school.