The newest edition of our e-bulletin is here!

We presented the results of a nation-wide literacy and numeracy study, but we had many other trainings, events and new resources! Go through the pages of our bulletin to learn more about this.

“Results from the nationwide study indicate serious problems, such as low level of reading with comprehension as well as mathematical literacy. Changes are needed for better quality of education and these changes will become reality with the planned revision of curricula.” Prof. Dr. Renata Deskoska, Minister of Education and Science at the presentation event organized by Step by Step Foundation

Warm greetings from the Foundation “Step by Step” team

USAID Readers are Leaders Project

Nationwide literacy study results presented
New literacy handbook has been published
“How to read, learn, and have fun” trainings

The Learning Communities guided by School Coordinators

Five picture books in Bosnian language promoted

We joined MakeDox and Akto festivals. How did it go?

Second edition of the Speech4Teach event
Children’s Creative Center celebrates its 20th anniversary

“Local Responses, Global Advances” international conference

Elena Misik from Step by Step – Macedonia is the President Elect of ISSA Board

ROMA EMPOWERMENT AND AWARENESS FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH EDUCATION PROJECT

Official closeout activities

“САКАМ ДА... КАМАПАЊА ЗА РАДОВИ ЗА ОБРАЗОВАЊЕ ЗА РОМУПЕ”

Elena Misik from Step by Step – Macedonia is the President Elect of ISSA Board
On September 22, Foundation “Step by Step” – Macedonia as part of the USAID Readers are Leaders Project presented the nationwide findings from the early grade literacy and mathematics assessment study to the expert public and education stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau for Development of Education, National Examinations Center, Teachers’ Training Colleges, international donor community, local organizations as well as representatives of primary schools in Macedonia.

The presentation of nationwide findings was followed by a discussion in small groups, which resulted into recommendations and ideas for further activities to improve early grade reading and math. The suggestions and recommendations were provided for education institutions, for schools, for teachers as well as for increasing parental involvement. They will be shared with the institutions in order to be taken into account in their future activities.

**Recommendations for educational institutions:**

- NEC to continue with the implementation of EGRA and EGMA every three years;
- Revision of curricula and text books;
- Integrated learning;
- Putting in force the system for career and professional development of teachers;
- Launching campaign for revitalization of libraries.
Recommendations for schools:

- Substantial support and engagement of school management;
- Creating conditions for realizing additional and remedial classes;
- Regular implementation of reading and math assessment.

Recommendations for teachers:

- Individual approach and differentiation of teaching;
- Holistic approach in language and math skills development;
- Instruments for continued monitoring and evaluation of language and math development.

Recommendations for parents:

- Parents should plan the free time of their children;
- Parents should align their own free time with the free time of their children;
- Parents should read together with their child, but they should also set example for their children (by reading themselves);
- Parents should involve other family members (grandparents and siblings).

The study was conducted in May 2016 on a representative sample of 8,000 students from all primary schools in the Republic of Macedonia, in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish language of instruction.
In August we published the handbook Step by Step to literacy — 50 activities for enhancing language skills that teachers can use in the classroom, but also parents can use most of these activities to support their children’s learning at home. Activities are aimed primarily for Grade 1-3 students, but small modifications can make them fit for more advanced grades as well.

In this handbook, for each of the activities we offer:

- detailed description
- guidance for preparation
- list of materials needed

The handbook also offers work sheets where you can note all your comments or adaptations you wish to make for each of the offered activities so that they are most suitable to the needs of the students that you work with.

“This handbook takes into account all recommendations and insights from most recent domestic and world studies on the relevant topic. It offers teachers new strategies, ideas and instructions on how to use various visual and didactic resources for a more efficient language instruction.” — Prof. Dr. Kiril Barbareev, Faculty of Educational Sciences — Shtip
During this period, we carried out training sessions on literacy for the teachers who are members of the learning communities in 27 primary schools. These training sessions are an excellent opportunity for teachers to acquire new techniques and skills for language teaching. After finalizing the sessions in these 27 schools, we can now proudly say that teachers from ALL primary schools in Macedonia “read, learned, and had fun”.

Language activities in PS Aleksandar Makedonski, Municipality of Aerodrom

Warm-up activities for training participants in PS Nikola Karev in Radovish
In the last period a very important milestone was met with regards of the learning communities which is the transference of responsibilities to the school coordinators in the 42 pilot schools. The school coordinators are school representatives selected based on their engagement and dedication to the learning communities and among them there are lower primary school teachers, school pedagogues and psychologists and even school principals. In the future the school coordinators will be in charge of conducting support meetings and organizing networking events and through this scaffold approach they will contribute to strengthening the school learning culture and project sustainability. The School coordinators have already conducted one support meeting and submitted reports. The general conclusions are that the teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the learning community as a participatory and meaningful form of professional development through which they can network and discuss pedagogical practice.

5 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING COMMUNITIES

1. Shared Vision
   Teachers and principals must have a shared vision about the teaching and education quality.

2. Shared Leadership
   Setting support mechanisms in place – providing time, resources and personnel for long-term success.

3. Giving choice and shared responsibilities
   Management must give teachers choice of domains in which they will act and hear their voice in the process of planning and implementation of professional learning.

4. Collaboration
   Creating opportunities and conditions that facilitate face-to-face collaboration as well as through using online digital tools.

5. Support
   Nothing is once and for all. Support should be continuous and provided in different ways.
The Foundation Step by Step continues its commitment to create quality learning resources that will be available for students with as many different languages of instruction. Most recently, we selected five titles of the children’s book collection “Our First Library” and we adapted and published them into bilingual edition — Macedonian and Bosnian language. Members of the Association for Promotion of Bosnian Culture Divanhana who also work as teachers in the Bosnian language school in the village of Ljubin, Saraj, contributed by translating these books.

“The collection of children’s books developed by USAID Readers are Leaders Project arrived at our school in Macedonian language. When reading these stories to our students, we, the teachers, had to directly translate them into Bosnian. Now, these bilingual editions will not only make teachers’ job less complicated, but they will also be a valuable reading resource in our students’ mother tongue.” — Sanela Tarik, lower-grade teacher from PS Dituria, village of Ljubin, Saraj.

On September 27, we joined their traditional celebration to mark the Day of Bosnian Culture in Macedonia in this school. It was an excellent occasion to promote the exciting stories with a reading session in our Magic Literacy Van.

These books are available in electronic PDF form in our Digital Library.
This summer, our Magic Literacy Van joined several summer festivals to offer children across the country some fun reading time during the summer holidays.

We were part of MakeDox travelling cinema that this time travelled around the area of Porece, Makedonski Brod. On July 20 we visited the village Trebino, on July 23 we visited Brest, and on July 25 we visited Manastirec. In all three locations we had a lot of children, family and local community members visiting our Magic Literacy Van. We read picture books, played some math games and we did some art. As soon as the sun went down, we all enjoyed the documentary movie screenings under the stars thanks to the excellent selection done by our friends from MakeDox.

On September 2, the Magic Literacy Van was part of the kids’ programme at the Festival for Contemporary Arts — Akto in Bitola. All activities and workshops held in the park in front of the Officer’s Hall in the town, were aimed to trigger discussion and generate new ideas on how this beautiful old building can and should be reused as a public space for the citizens.

With the start of the new school year, the Magic Literacy Van continued its tour around primary schools, with a special focus on remote rural areas.

If you want us to come to your school or to your municipality, contact us on 02/3077-900 or via email: nenad@stepbystep.org.mk
Second year in a row we organized the Speech4Teach-Inspiration for Education event, as part of the USAID Readers are Leaders Project. On November 1 in the Youth Cultural Center in Skopje, we had more than 250 participants joining us for a session of inspirational talks shared by selected speakers in the role of teachers, parents, children’s authors, and professors.

“There’s a saying, teachers are the backbone of our society. They play an integral role in shaping students into future model citizens. Teachers care about their students and often treat them like their very own. I know this for a fact because I know how my daughter prepares for her classes every day and how much she cares about each student in her classroom” – USAID Macedonia Country Representative, David Atteberry
This year, the following inspirational speakers shared their stories on stage:

- **Shpetim Latifi**: The USAID and LCIF Children with Visual Impairments Project Chief of Party
- **Kiril Barbareev**: Professor at the Faculty of Education, University “Goce Delcev” - Shtip and education blogger
- **Radmila Rangelov Jusovik**: Executive Director of Center for Educational Initiatives Step by Step – Bosnia and Herzegovina (video message)
- **Gorast Cvetkovski**: Actor and parent
- **Vanco Polazarevski**: Writer of children's book
- **Vesela Bogdanovikj**: Lower-primary teacher from Koco Racin primary school in the village Ivanjevci, Mogila, and selected as Top50 innovative teachers worldwide by Varkey Foundation and her Grade 5 students
Some of the topics tackled in this year’s inspirational talks were the boundaries of the inclusive education, the possible ways of restructuring teacher pre-service training, the role of the parents in today’s digital world and the standards of a quality children’s literature. A group of Grade 5 students shared with the audience their perspectives and points of view on what a good teacher should be like and what kind of teachers they would be if that is what they decide to do when they grow up.

The talks are aimed at inspiring and stimulating the audience to rethink and discuss around important education issues and look at these issues and ideas from a different point of view, as offered by the inspirational speakers.

A special value to this event was added by a group of teachers who are members of the learning communities from several primary schools – Blaze Koneski – Veles, Blaze Koneski – Prilep, Mancu Matak – Krivogashtani, PS Perparimi – Cegrane, PS Vasil Glavinov – Veles, PS Tosho Velkov Pepeto – Kavadarci, and PS Grigor Prlicev – Ohrid. They presented their portfolios and posters of their development work with the aim to advance their pedagogical work and share experience with their peer-teachers from across the country.

On this occasion, visitors had the chance to pose questions and discuss with the speakers and the presenters. The high number of attendees on both editions of the Speech4Teach event so far is a strong proof and incentive that this event will turn into a long tradition.

See you at the Speech4Teach 2018!
Children’s Creative Center located within the Youth Cultural Center – Skopje was initially opened as part of the educational program Step by Step back in 1997 as a first resource center for the youngest audience in the country. In 2014, as part of the USAID Readers are Leaders Project it has been completely renovated and equipped with materials and activities focusing on fostering literacy and creativity. Within these 20 years of its existence, thousands of children from kindergartens and primary schools from all parts of the country have visited the center.

To mark the 20th anniversary, we invited students and teachers from 11 Oktomvri primary school from the Municipality of Centar. Together we created art, did some fun math and we read some exciting stories.

“Together with the first grade students from my class, as well as with a few parents and colleagues from our school, we joined the celebration of the Children’s Creative Center 20th birthday! It was a truly inspiring event, with the students being involved in creating a group poster. We all enjoyed this very much. When the day ended, I was overwhelmed by these positive impressions. And I was happy to hear that one of the parents from my class who had joined for the event, feels the same. Well, I have to say that I love my job so much!” – Biljana Vasik, lower-grade teacher

If you visit the Children’s Creative Center, you will find giant picture books and a library of children’s literature, cozy reading nooks, interactive math games, children’s theater and art corner, as well as digital learning resources. The center is suitable for children from preschools and lower primary classes, accompanied by their teachers or parents. For more information and visiting hours, please contact the Youth Cultural Center in Skopje.

For additional information on the USAID Readers are Leaders Project, contact our office via telephone +389 2 3077-900 or the project’s Communications Coordinator Ana Dimovska via email: ana@stepbystep.org.mk
The official project closeout event was organised on June 23, 2017 in the premises of Center for Social Initiatives Nadez – Suto Orizari, Skopje with more than 70 guests: EU, representative of the Ministry of Education and Science, USAID, German Embassy, school and local community representatives, project partners and beneficiaries. The project and its outcomes were presented and an exhibition of children’s work and the campaign materials was organised. Children took part by performing song and dance, and several adults – mothers gave their opinions on the project.
ISSA’s 2017 international conference “Local Responses, Global Advances: Towards Competent Early Childhood Systems” was held in October 2017 in the City of Ghent, attracting over 450 participants from 60 countries from around the world. Participants discussed how the speed of change in today’s world affects early childhood development, requiring substantial shifts in the ways early childhood systems are designed, equipped, governed, financed and supported. The conference united the knowledge and practice of researchers, practitioners, policy makers, donors and NGOs from around the world to explore themes through discussions and interactive sessions, while participants shared their insights and solutions.

The Conference was co-organised by ISSA, the City of Ghent, VBJK, Artevelde University College and Ghent University. Three pre-conference workshops kicked-off a week of knowledge sharing, focusing on Integrated services in the early years, Developing sustainability through fundraising and Intervention packages to support nurturing care. The conference had over 100 presentations, plenary sessions and panel discussions.

Elena Misik was appointed President of the International Step by Step Association Board for the period January 2018 – December 2019. Elena Misik is Program Manager at Step By Step Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives Macedonia. As an expert researcher, program developer, project manager and evaluator, Elena has worked on over 20 projects for organizations such as the World Bank, USAID, UNICEF, the Foundation Open Society Macedonia, UNDP and for the EU. Elena has been a member of ISSA’s Membership Committee since 2015, and in that capacity she made important contributions to work related to membership recruitment and services.

ISSA Board has the aim to ensure that the Association is consistent to it mission and oversees ISSA’s work, promotes early childhood development with all relevant stakeholders and provides support in the creation of new resources. ISSA’s network currently consists of 77 organizations from 49 countries from around the world.