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# ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

## 2019

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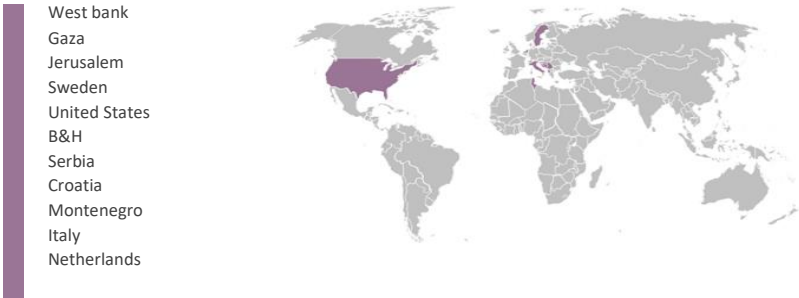
# ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

EDUS is a key B&H non-governmental and non-for-profit organization when it comes to the research, introduction and establishment of quality evidence-based Early Childhood Development (ECD) services in a highly fragmented system of healthcare, education, and social welfare. We have pioneered programs of Early Detection and Interventions, Parent Education, Inclusive Preschool, After-School Programs, Programs for children with severe disabilities, Summer and Winter School programs, Teacher and other professional staff trainings and developed curriculums and tools for them to work with. Our evidence-based interventions with the support mostly from foreign donors, over the past 9 years, have directly helped thousands of children with and without developmental delays and disorders and their families, whilst indirect impact, through trainings of professional staff throughout the country and the region, is significantly larger.

EDUS leads by example and promotes believes that education/support should be available and accessible to all children, no child or family should be discriminated against regardless of their abilities, disabilities, gender, national identity, place of residence, religious beliefs, or background. Beneficiaries of our services come from all regions of our country and from different Balkan and European countries and receive an equal treatment. Since an “early start” is a key for development, we strive to introduce evidence-based Early Childhood Developmental Screening and Monitoring and Early Childhood Interventions in order to give each child a good start and a chance to achieve their full potential. Children with disabilities have an equal right to access inclusive, quality education, and a right to the support and adaptations necessary to achieve their long-term goals.

EDUS signed a partnership agreement and collaborate with numerous education, health, and social warfare private and public institutions in the country and the world. We promote, develop, and strengthen ties with other organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, and actively seeks corporate and philanthropic support in order to advance and expand our programs. We have a proven record in cross-country and inter-entity cooperation with a particular emphasis on improving relations between diverse ethnic communities through the dissemination of best practices in working with children with and without developmental delays and disorders.

In terms of advancing the ECD system in B&H, EDUS continually tries to provide critical support by developing valid tools for professionals to use and programs for continual professional education, monitoring, and supervision in health, education, and social welfare private and public sectors. We try to bring innovation and advancement in all segments of the society.



COUNTRIES IMPACTED BY THE WORK OF EDUS

### PRE SCHOOL AND EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

In the year 2019 we continued collaboration with the public education system and the introduction of the EDUS innovative programs. With the Ministry of Education of the Canton Sarajevo, we again tried to find solutions to expand and continue the evidence-based programs of Early Intervention (18- months to 3 years old) and Inclusive Preschool Program (3 years – 8 years old).



Government approved the engagement of 32 educators to work directly with children with developmental delays and disorders across 9 classrooms all organized and supervised by the EDUS program coordinator and supervisors with funding until December 2019. Total of 44 educators (32 approved by Government and 12 funded by EDUS) worked directly with 116 children. Children enrolled in the program of Early Intervention attended individualized focused intervention 3 hours 5 days per week, while children attending Preschool Program, received individualized intervention for 5 hours each day. Early Intervention was organized in two shifts, 3 hours each per day, while the preschool program was organized into classrooms according to children's levels of functioning for 5 hours daily. Unfortunately, due to the funding issues and political and organizational problem at the Center "Vladimir Nazor", program of Early Intervention was not continued in the second semester (September-December), while preschool program was expanded to 10 classrooms. Number of children and staff stayed the same.

EDUS Experimental Program Module was officially approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Canton Sarajevo on June 2019. This legal decision now officially declared that EDUS is in charge of Improvement of Education and Support to Children with and without Developmental Delays and in charge of the implementation of the experimental program, while the preschool department of the Public Institution Center "Vladimir Nazor" provided premises. Unfortunately, with the fall of the Cantonal Government, funding for the programs educators and the actual continuation was stopped after December 31<sup>st</sup> 2019.

The main goal of EDUS Experimental Program was to introduce and develop a modern, scientifically supported and proven in practice model of children's education and education of professional staff, in accordance with the latest world standards. All EDUS's programs providing services directly to children with disabilities were created based on **The Comprehensive Application of Behavior Analysis to Schooling (CABAS®)**, the only scientifically proven methodology adapted to local conditions to qualitatively improve the support system for children with and without developmental delays and disabilities.

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

With support from a Grant from **The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth of Sarajevo Canton and Australian Embassy in Vienna** afterschool activities were organized for 2 hours every weekday during the first half of the school year program. These workshops had a great impact on children's social skills and gave them the opportunity to practice and generalize what they have learned in Early Intervention and Preschool classrooms. The grant covered activities besides art and craft, music, and sports workshops including equipping classrooms with needed materials, improving the competencies of professional staff (teacher training) and improving the competencies of parents for independent work with children at home (parent education).



The **Art & Craft workshops** were designed to foster the creativity of each child through contact with different materials and using different senses. Through various sensory activities, children explored art by creating sculptures, using different painting techniques and materials while working in groups and expressing their artistic talents.



**Music workshops** served as active music therapy sessions lasting 60 minutes. Each session consisted of a wide range of different activities including exploring various instruments like percussion instruments, bongos, egg-shakers, xylophones, drums, etc. Children were creating music, singing, exploring different sounds while participating in a group with friends, led by a music teacher. With a famous children's author and singer, they performed his children's songs with actions and danced.



**Sports/Gros motor skills workshops** helped children work on their motor skills development and sensory integration by practicing muscle movement through individualized exercises. Educators used different equipment, games and kids of sports to engage all children. The favorite was the use of a trampoline for practicing proprioceptive skills and "animal yoga" for posture and strength. Children learned about their body awareness through exercises, pushing, pulling, throwing, climbing, jumping, etc.

## PARENT EDUCATION



With the support of the **Australian Embassy in Vienna**, EDUS implemented 12 sessions of **PARENT EDUCATION**. Parents active role in their children's development and education is of the greatest importance. Parent Education is an integral part of the EDUS programs because only by partnering with parents, we can together achieve the greatest gains. Providing parents with instructions on how to carry over the good practices from the classroom into their homes, showed great results for the advancement of levels of functioning of their children. Through the use of this approach, the role of families was strengthened by providing parents support and the ability to actively and positively influence outcomes for their children. Parents attended lectures on topic pertaining to their daily life functioning as a family, how to stimulate different developmental areas, how to engage a child with disabilities with a sibling/friend, how to toilet train their

children, how to best advocate for their child's rights, how to build independence at home, etc.

In addition, we provided 100 parents with **individualized parent education sessions**, where each parent (mother, father or caregiver) received a session with their child's educator and gained detailed knowledge on the development of their child, advancement through their child's programs and short and long-term goals. They were provided with examples and instructions on how to use simple tactics and learn how to implement programs at home to reinforce their child's development and possibly prevent regression.

As part of the **UNICEF B&H and EDUS PCA** agreement, 6 Parent Education sessions were conducted in Mostar and Foča (three parent education sessions per location) kindergartens. Total of 48 parents participated at Mostar, while 63 parents participated at Foča. The lecturers/trainers at both locations were professionals who completed the EDUS ToT Training and were using EDUS Parent Education Curriculum (Pistoljevic, N., Buturovic, L. & Jeina, Z. 2015) at their public preschool locations. EDUS mentors provided guidance and feedback, and these sessions were part of the Training of Trainers EDUS conducted in order to transfer knowledge and strengthen the ECD system throughout the country. Both, Foča and Mostar recognized importance of Parent Education as the first line of intervention and prevention of early childhood delays.





## WORK WITH THE PUBLIC SYSTEMS

### ADVANCEMENT OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN B&H

Together with UNICEF B&H EDUS continue to work on the advancement of public systems in Health, Education and Social Welfare sectors and building capacities for equitable provision of quality ECD and ECI services, especially for the most vulnerable and excluded children. Through this partnership, EDUS committed to building the capacity of all staff involved in the ECD approach and ensure that an integrated approach is effectively adopted and innovative quality ECD and ECI services are available in selected locations. Professionals from the above-mentioned sectors gained in-depth knowledge on Early Childhood Detection and Early Childhood Intervention through Basic and Advanced Educational Training EDUS provided.

In 2019 Early Detection and Intervention services were being provided at the 28 locations across B&H Resource Centers and Resource Rooms by the local professionals. They were using EDUS tools and applying knowledge from the EDUS trainings on developmental screening, testing, and designing educational/therapeutic interventions for children identified with developmental delays/disorders. EDUS supported the locations by continually providing supervision and feedback for all the trainees at the locations and/or online.



In addition, EDUS provided training for professionals (preschool and schoolteachers) who gained knowledge on Early Childhood development with application of basic scientific tactics for the work with children of preschool and school age and training on differentiated learning was developed. In addition, Manuals for teachers to help them implement evidence-based tactics to better inclusion was written to compliment the training.

### ADVANCEMENT OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN STATE OF PALESTINE



EDUS continued working on the goals outlined in the **Programmed cooperation agreement (PCA)** with **UNICEF Palestine** to ensure effective implementation of integrated ECD and ECI in Palestine. The overall project objective from 2017-2020 was to strengthen early childhood development and intervention services in the State of Palestine. In cooperation with Palestinian Ministries of Health, Education and Social Welfare, UNWRA, Universities and relevant NOG's, EDUS designed training modules for the professionals and provided training of multidisciplinary teams on Early intervention of delays and disorders, then on Early Intervention services. In 2019 EDUS educator's/ expert trainers had 5 missions/trainings in Palestine, both in West Bank and in Gaza, focusing on Early Childhood Intervention and the validation study of DBS- Palestine, a first and only developmental screening in Arabic.



We trained the data collectors and mentors/supervisors for the DBS-P (Developmental Behavioral Scales-Palestine) validation study. In addition, data collection process and data entry process were supervised remotely across the country and live interobserver agreement observations were done during the missions to the country.

## EDUCATION OF PROFESSIONALS

Through partnership with **UNCIEF-B&H** and relevant ministries, EDUS created ECD ToT-Training of Trainers (University Professors, Pediatricians, Pediatric Nurses, Speech and Language Pathologist, Preschool Teachers). Eleven professionals participated in the 5 days of training. They were selected experts from various public institutions across the county who already demonstrated excellence in providing ECD services at their locations. Experts were selected and completed the training to transfer knowledge to their communities covering areas of detection and intervention services for children with developmental delays and disorders.



As for the Basic ECI training which we have provided at EDUS location as part of the UNICEF-B&H and EDUS PCA agreement for the past 3 years, we provided theoretical and hands-on training for 25 health and other professionals from 5 locations across B&H. They participated in 3 + 3 days Basic ECI training, visiting EDUS on two occasions and practicing learned skills at their locations in between the trainings. Total 6 - day training included lectures and workshops with direct work with children focusing on establishing Early Detection and Intervention services at their institutions. Professionals gained knowledge in prevention, detection, and intervention in ECD and the framework of organization of activities in integrated Resource Centers and Rooms.

Following the Basic training, 13 health and other professionals from 4 locations (Banja Luka, Travnik, Zenica and Vitez) in B&H participated in a 3-days Advanced ECI training. Training focused on advanced skills for development of Individualized Education Plans and tactics for implementing them. During the three days spent at EDUS, professionals listen to the lectures from EDUS supervisors and then practiced learned skills through workshops and direct work with children in EDUS classrooms while being with individual mentors. Feedback and supervision were continued through visits to the ECD Centers and Rooms or online.



Two trainings were organized in cooperation with **Goethe Institute Sarajevo** for elementary school teachers of German language from all over the country. First training focused on learning about different disabilities and tactics on differentiated instructions for various learners. Second two-day training focused on workshops and practicing different technics of maximizing active learning in any classroom. Three EDUS educators designed the trainings and provided all the lectures and workshops.

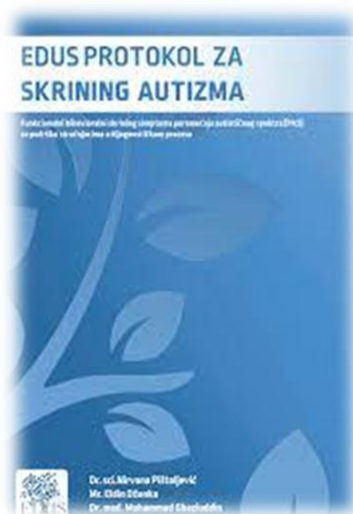




The EDUS methodology is recognized in Croatia too. In accordance with that, training was provided in Dubrovnik, in collaboration with the **Public Institution Kindergartens Dubrovnik, Croatia**. The first training was held in October 2018. while the continuation of education is planned in 2019. Preschool and Kindergarten teachers from Dubrovnik attended the training focusing on how to better create inclusive setting. EDUS educators provided training on early childhood development and detection of delays and disorders in the first part of the training series.



## RESEARCH AND SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES



In 2019 we continued with five major research studies. Study 1- validation of the Developmental Behavior Scales was completed, data entered and analyzed. An application version of RBS-II, web and tablet based for Early Detection of developmental disorders was created and being tested. Data were collected on its efficacy and efficiency. Data were finalized and a scientific publication manuscript is being written.

Study 2 - Protocol for Autism Screening was designed to support experts and speed up the diagnostic process for ASD. Within the Study 2, additional research questions were asked: What are the possible barriers in diagnosing ASD in B&H? and Can we use salivary miRNA to identify children with ASD when compared with children with other disorders and typically developing children? Data were collected on the additional two research questions too.

A promotional video on the Importance of Early Childhood Development and Early Detection and Intervention was created for raising public awareness of delays and disorders and what we need to do within our existing system in B&H. Data from the Study 1 collected from the screenings of 1500 children were reported in the video as well some of the important findings from Study 2.

Study 3- Comparison of 3 different Early Intervention Models in B&H was in the process of being completed. Data were still being collected on the post probes, after which the analysis will be done and manuscript for publication will be written.

In collaboration with students and professors from SSST University, Sarajevo, EDUS educators participated in testing a new web application for creating educational and therapeutic programs for children with disabilities. Dr. Pistoljević provided guidelines to computer science students and professors for creating such tool and EDUS was a testing location for its utility. The results of this study were published.

Together with the **Academy of Sciences and Arts of B&H (ANU BiH)** and support from **USAID**, EDUS organized an **International Symposium on Early Childhood Development and Developmental Disorders** that gathered over 150 academics, professors, scientists, and professionals from B&H and the world. In addition, from the lectures provided by Prof. Dinarevic, (pediatrician, ANU BiH) Prof. Saracevic (geneticist, SSST), and Dr. Pistoljevic and her research team (EDUS), invited speakers were a child psychiatrist, Prof. Ghaziuddin (University of Michigan, USA) and developmental psychologist, Prof. Erjavec (Bangor University, UK). EDUS presented current results from the three research studies completed under the grant from USAID/PPMG program. Results of Study 1- validation study of the Developmental Behavioral Screening completed with 1500 children, their parents, and 40 professionals in B&H were presented. Eldin Dzanko (EDUS) presented various findings from the study and that 25.6% of children in B&H are at risk of not reaching their full potential, while Ljiljana Miljanovic (EDUS) presented the results of the parents' survey and possible environmental effects on the disabilities in B&H.



Results of Study-2 were presented in two lectures. Genetics research on the salivary miRNA and how it can be used to differentiate children with and without ASD was explained by Dr. Saracevic. Dr. Pistoljevic presented EDUS Protocol for Autism Screening and findings during the development of the same. The Preliminary data from Study 3, which was still ongoing were also shared. The focus of the study was the comparison of the 3 types of intervention for children with disabilities in B&H: EDUS- Intense, Resource Centers and Rooms- low-intensity, and eclectic approach.



Dr. Pistoljevic presented EDUS achievements as an invited speaker at the **45th Annual ABAI Convention**, largest International Conference, held in May 2019, in Chicago, USA. 20,000 participants from all over the world participated with over 10,000 presentations, and we presented two scientific studies, results from research EDUS conducted in classrooms and ECD centers. Dr. Pistoljevic gave a talk on a topic Applied Behaviour Analysis for All: Building Systems to Help Children Through Transdisciplinary Behavioral Approach.

As part of the celebration of the 30 years of The UN Convention on the Rights of Children, the Ombudsmen office of Novi Sad in collaboration with Novi Sad Network for Children invited Dr. Pistoljevic to give a lecture on the topic of "The Children's Rights to Quality Support of Early Childhood Development at the Local Level". Dr. Pistoljevic, as the representative of EDUS, also while at Novi Sad, held lectures to the students of psychology and pedagogy at **The University of Novi Sad** and introduce them to EDUS methodologies and programs. She visited Center Harmony, an NGO providing parent deduction on early childhood stimulation and parental counseling. Together, they met with the head pediatrician and visited the Reader Bear Corner project location where books and stimulation are provided for children at the pediatric clinics as part of the promotion of early childhood development. Dr. Pistoljevic held a lecture for the pediatric and visiting nurses and pediatricians from Novi Sad on the topic **"Guidelines for Early Detection of Disabilities; The Role of Pediatricians and Home-Visiting Nurses"**. As an invited speaker at the International Scientific Conference: Current trends in psychology hosted by the University of Novi Sad, Dr. Pistoljevic gave a talk titled **"Evidence-Based Approaches to Early Development Support Programs"**. She presented EDUS research findings on the optimal intervention programs and shared insight into different models of early intervention to support early childhood development.



Dr. Nirvana Pistoljevic and Dzana Hrvic, as an invited speaker, participated at a Conference in Teslić organized by the **Ministry of Education and Culture Republic of Srpska with the support of UNICEF B&H**, as part of the project "Improving Early Childhood Growth and Development by Strengthening Educational and Parental Competences". The conference gathered about 270 educators and professional associates. Dr. Pistoljevic gave two lectures: **"Program of Psychosocial Support for Parents of Children with Developmental Disorders"**, outlining the chapter in the upcoming booklet for teachers and parents she has authored and **"Early detection of children with disabilities and how to monitor their development."** While the supervisor of the EDUS Early Intervention program, Dzana Hrvic, gave talk on **"Application of instruments for assessing the development of the child."**



#### EDUS PUBLICATIONS IN 2019:

Pistoljevic, N. Dzanko, E. Ghaziuddin, M. (2019). **EDUS protocol for Autism screening: A functional behavioral screening of ASD symptoms to aid professionals in diagnostic process**. EDUS-Education for All. Sarajevo, B&H.

Ramic-Brkic, B., Balik, A., Hadzidedic, S., Pistoljevic, N. (2019). **Web tool for creating educational/therapeutic programs**. In *International Conference on Virtual Worlds and Games for Serious Application* (pp. 1-4). Springer International Publishing.



## EDUS PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED LECTURES IN 2019:

- Chair of the symposium: **“Early Childhood Development and Developmental Disorders”** at Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo, B&H, March, 2019.
- **“Applied Behavior Analysis for All: Building Systems to Help Children through Transdisciplinary Behavioral Approach”** lecture given at the 45th Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Chicago, IL, May 2019.
- **“Rights of Children to Quality Support for Early Childhood Development in the Local Community”** Festival of Rights of Children, Ombudsmen Office- Novi Sad, Serbia, October 2019.
- **“Evidence Based Approaches to Early Development Support Programs”**. Scientific conference: Current trends in psychology 2019. Novi Sad, Serbia, October 2019.
- **“Guidelines for Early Detection of Disabilities; The Role of Pediatricians and Home-Visiting Nurses”** Novi Sad Health Clinic, Novi Sad, Serbia, October 2019.
- **“Program of Psychosocial Support for Parents of Children with Developmental Disorders”** Plenary talk given at The UNICEF & Ministry of Education of RS Conference on Advancement of Early Childhood Development through Strengthening Competences of Parents and Teachers. Teslic. B&H, November 2019.
- **“Early Detection of Children with Developmental Disorders and how to Monitor their Development”** Plenary talk at The UNICEF & Ministry of Education of RS Conference on Advancement of Early Childhood Development through Strengthening Competences of Parents and Teachers. Teslic. B&H, November 2019

## FUNDRAISING EVENTS



We marked the **World Autism Awareness Day** in cooperation with the Association “Marathon” at their annual spring 5K run with the support by **Australian Embassy in Vienna**. The event concept was the same as previous year. Runners/Walkers wore BLUE EDUS designed T-shirts and were fundraising by “selling” their kilometers in order to support EDUS and children on the autistic spectrum. The slogan this year was “Be a friend- Buy a round”, since the race was held in the city center and was run in a circle around the main part of the city center. The race was held in April, as this is a month of Autism Awareness. More than 300 participants took part in this race under the motto “I'm Running for Someone with Autism”. Together, we were able to raised 32.167,56 KM for children with developmental delays enrolled in EDUS Program.



## OFFICIAL VISITS

Every year, EDUS classrooms are visited by many professors, researchers, diplomats, politicians, educators, students, and professionals from various fields from all over the world. H.E. Ambassador of Australian Embassy in Vienna had an official visit since for the past 5 years they are continually supporting our work. The Association was also visited on several occasions by political officials: representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Sarajevo Canton, Prime Minister of Sarajevo Canton, Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and H.E. Ambassador of Egypt.



The Minister of Education, Science and Culture of the Province of Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) Karin Prien and representatives of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Sarajevo visited our classrooms and met with the President of the EDUS Assembly Sanela Lindsay and the coordinator for scientific research, Eldin Džanko.

## OTHER



Dr. Pistoljevic worked with UNP-B&H on the SDG 2030 Framework for B&H. As a part of the team of experts, through collaboration with relevant policy stakeholders and governmental agencies, lead the development of the Social Inclusion and Human Capital Pathways indicators and measures.



EDUS was very honored to have **Pediatric Association of Serbia** adjust and translate our Early Childhood Development: What you Should Know brochure with the help of **UNICEF Serbia**. Thousands of the copies were made and shared to parents across Pediatric departments at Health Clinics throughout the country.



EDUS was selected as a partner for creating a Special Issue on Autism published as an addition in the major weekly paper in B&H. Dr. Pistoljevic gave a detailed interview where she explained all the newest findings about ASD, while several EDUS parents gave their accounts of life challenges and positive sides of having children with Autism.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

### ASSEMBLY:

- President of the Assembly
- 15 members

### STEERING BOARD:

- Steering Board President
- 4 Members of the Board

### EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS:

- Executive Director
- Parent Council President

### HUMAN RESOURCES:

- Project Manager
- Financial Manager
- Project Manager Assistant
- Financial Manager Assistant
- Project Coordinator
- Administrative Support

### RESEARCH TEAM:

- Research Coordinator
- Research Coordinator Assistant
- National and International Consultants

### PROGRAM/EDUCATION STAFF:

- Program Coordinator
- Program Supervisors
- 44 Professionals (working directly with children)

