



USAID
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Story From a Forgotten Town: From an Unemployed Woman to an Entrepreneur

“Fund for supporting businesses owned by marginalized women”



Project title: Fund for supporting businesses owned by marginalized women

Project duration: 1 October 2016 – 28 October 2017

Funding: 680,000 BAM

Project implemented in: Zvornik, Livno, Kalinovik, Visoko, Rudo, Tešanj, Teslić, Konjic and Prijedor

Project summary: USAID's Marginalized Populations Support Activity, in cooperation with 9 local self-government units provides support to businesses owned by marginalized women. This support is intended for SMEs run by women with disabilities, women from rural areas, women victims of violence, young unemployed women...

Getting up at the crack of dawn, going to sleep late at night, protecting from wind and rain the only thing that can provide you with a livelihood for the next few months – this is what Vesna Budnjar's days looked like. Vesna is a mother of two who lives in Kalinovik, some 60 km away from Sarajevo, but she says she often feels that she and her neighbors have been completely forgotten by everyone. For years now, she has been picking forest fruit, drying and then selling them. She picks cepes and rosehips, dries and sells them to make money to support her family.

She used to be at the mercy of the elements. Rain and wind reduced the quality of her products and made the drying process slower. She dried the fruit on improvised dryers, on meadows in the sun. She didn't make much because she couldn't offer high quality products. With every rain Vesna struggled to save her hard work, to get the fruit inside so all her effort wouldn't be in vain.

Then she saw a great opportunity. USAID's Fund for supporting businesses owned by marginalized women and the Municipality of Kalinovik decided to help women pushed to the margins of society, and Vesna took advantage of this opportunity and her potential by applying to receive funds.

USAID and the Municipality of Kalinovik awarded funds to Vesna, which she used to buy a drying chamber and become an entrepreneur. The drying chamber provided her with better working conditions, increased productivity, more profit and a better life for her and her family.

Now Vesna isn't struggling to stay afloat, she's actually living. She is the proud owner of a much more serious business. She is an entrepreneur.

“I still get up early and work all day, but I don't complain because I know that my work will bear fruit. I know that what I make will be bought and that my effort isn't in vain.” – says Vesna, while she watches her children with pride in her eyes because, thanks to her work, she can pay for their education and help them become independent.

Vesna is one of a hundred women who received support from USAID's Marginalized Populations Support Activity and nine local administrations to launch and grow their own business. A business that will provide them with an income and independence and restore their faith in a better future.