

PRESS RELEASE

International Nurses Day - 12 May 2021

International Nurses Day 2021 looks at the challenges nursing faces and how the profession will transform the future of healthcare. With the current situation, the importance and the need to invest in the nursing workforce is clearer than ever before. The Swiss-funded Strengthening Nursing in Bosnia and Herzegovina Project firmly believes the following supporting message is true: “Save one life and you are a hero. Save a hundred lives - you must be a nurse”.

Today we are celebrating the International Day of Nurses themed „Nurses – A Voice to Lead: A vision for future healthcare“. COVID-19 has exposed the weaknesses in our health systems and the enormous pressure our nurses are working under, as well as shining a light on their everyday commitment and courage. The pandemic has also forced the health system to experiment models of care where nurses are at the centre of the delivery of care. Nurses, as the largest healthcare profession in number, have shown the instrumental role they play to keep a country standing.

There are around 20'000 nurses in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The **Strengthening Nursing in Bosnia and Herzegovina (ProSes)** project has been providing intense support to the relevant partners in the areas of nursing regulation, service standardization, nurse education and empowerment of professional nurse associations since 2012. The project is financed by the Government of Switzerland and implemented by Fondacija fami (BIH) and the University Hospitals of Geneva. So far, the achievements include newly established professional development trainings (over 3600 nurses trained), newly trained community nurses (252 in 14 municipalities) and newly adopted standardized nursing procedures increasing the quality of care (139 procedures for primary healthcare centres and hospitals). As a result, more than 750'000 people in BIH can benefit from expanded community nursing services.

The nursing profession in BiH is still facing many challenges: (i) the shortage of qualified nurses and their retention, (ii) inadequate work conditions leading to stress, burnout and resigning, (iii) lack of participation in the educational process and (iv) lack of involvement in health-policy making are some of them.

Barbara Dätwyler Scheuer, the Director of Cooperation at the Embassy of Switzerland to Bosnia and Herzegovina said “Qualified nurses are the best partners to preserve our health. They touch the lives of patients. And I am sure that you agree if I say that nurses – always working on the frontline – are the real heroes of the ongoing pandemic. In BIH, as in the rest of the world, nurses make up the largest group of healthcare professionals. So how does it come that the nursing profession is still not yet fully recognized? We want to change that. Jointly with our partners, the Government of Switzerland is strengthening the nursing profession in BiH since 2012 and will continue to do it”.

The supporting message will be displayed on **May 12th** on LED screens in Banjaluka, Bijeljina, Brcko, Dobož, Mostar, Zenica, Posusje, Istocno Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Trebinje and Tuzla, and projected on the facades of the General Hospital in Bijeljina and the SCC shopping mall in Sarajevo.

Although daily life may have changed due to the pandemic, the core character of nursing has not. As carers, healers, educators, leaders and advocates, nurses are fundamental to the provision of safe, accessible and affordable care. We all have a role to play to ensure that our nurses are supported, protected, motivated and equipped to deliver safe health care at all times and enabled to guide the transformation of the healthcare system. Competent, qualified and recognized nurses are the best partners to preserve, restore and maintain our health. To be able to respond to emergencies such as this but also to the growing population needs, continuous investment in nursing is required.

Help up support nurses by sending us stories of your nurse-hero to: proses@fondacijafami.org.

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