Powering up the digital revolution for women and girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Driven by a partnership between the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), and UN Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, IT Girls aims to make girls and women more visible in the world of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

The initiative started in 2016 with a training workshop on the basics of website development for girls aged 13-15 years old in Sarajevo. Later, the project spread to other parts of the region, backed by the hard work of volunteers and students from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and International University in Sarajevo who helped the young girls to explore coding.

Ena Kosanović, UN Volunteer with UNDP, has a long history of volunteering since 2006, when she was just in primary school. Since 2016, she has been particularly proud of her contribution towards creating gender equality in her home country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, through IT Girls.
I have been asked so many times why I am volunteering during my free time for IT Girls. My answer was (and still is) always the same. The smiles of the girls when they successfully create their first websites or when they enter the right code and the robot starts to move. Their gratitude. That feeling of doing something good for others. --Ena Kosanović, UN Volunteer with UNDP and IT Girls

Armina Fazlić is another UN Volunteer who works with UNDP as Administrative Support Assistant for the Flood Recovery Programme, which helps the most vulnerable population affected by floods in the country. She is also a part of the IT Girls skill-building initiative and has found this experience of organizing the trainings both rewarding and eye-opening.

From Doboj to Mostar, from Srebrenica to Zenica, we noticed the same thing - a desire for exploring IT, curiosity, ideas, and skills. However, we also noticed something else – opportunities are not the same everywhere. --Armina Fazlić, UN Volunteer with UNDP and IT Girls
Armina Fazlić, UN Volunteer with UNDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In the present day, on the advice of Maja Hadziselimovic, a robotics engineer and Ambassador of EU Robotics Week, the initiative is focusing on building skills in Arduino, an open-source platform that drives innovations related to the Internet of Things. As well as being relevant and easy to learn, Arduino makes classes fun and interactive.

With that in mind, IT Girls moved online to seek crowdfunding to organize 6 Arduino workshops in at least 6 different schools for 120 girls. The crowdfunding has been a success, garnering 150% of the required funding assistance to spark the tech dreams of young girls in the region. The appeal for funding continues to reach the next milestone and create greater impact.
Nela Sladojevic, UN Volunteer with UNICEF in Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNV, 2018

For Nela Sladojevic, UN Volunteer with UNICEF and IT Girls, this project is nothing short of a digital revolution. As someone who has been engaged in helping young people to reach their full potential for over 15 years, she has an interesting personal story of success from UNLEASH Lab 2017, a global innovation lab focusing on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

"Thanks to our activities, two team members (Aleksandra and I) had the opportunity to represent IT Girls at UNLEASH. What happened there was completely unexpected. We both ended up in different teams and worked on development of different solutions. We also both ended up in the top 2 teams competing in the finals in the field of Education & ICT, and we won gold and silver!" --Nela Sladojević, UN Volunteer with UNICEF and IT Girls
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