



news from Novi Most winter 2023  
**New Bridge**

pioneering youth work in Bosnia and Herzegovina

@novimost

Welcome to our first New Bridge of 2023. One of the themes you will see running through this edition is the importance of being together. That is true for the teenagers we work with and just as true for the young adults. Sometimes this means us organising activities that bring young people together from across different ethnic backgrounds, sometimes it is about helping young believers to encourage one another as they learn to live out their faith in a society where it's very easy for them to feel like outsiders.

In the middle of January, young adults in Sarajevo organised a meeting for their peers from all over the region. Forty people from Mostar, Breza, Čapljina and Sarajevo, joined together in worship, discussion, games, and socialising. The sermon was about the feeling of confusion, whether that be in life in general, or in relation to faith and national identity. It was challenging but also something that young adults need to hear during these confusing times.

At the meeting, it was clear people were very happy to see their friends from different cities, excited for an opportunity to mingle with other young adults that they don't have the opportunity to see very often. There was a lot of good feedback about the atmosphere of acceptance at the event. As somebody said, "it was as if the spirit of summer camps was there!"

Ivica, Novi Most team leader from Capljina, says, "One thing we have noticed in the last year or two is that young people want to socialise more than before. Perhaps this is all a consequence of the crazy and unusual 2020, which was difficult and alienating for all of us, and teenagers are no exception. Novi Most tries to bring together young people from different cities who otherwise would never meet. We always try to use social gatherings to promote good and positive things."

At the end of last year, Ivica, along with Becca and Indira, hosted a teen gathering. Young teenagers aged 11 to 14 from Jajce, Mostar and Čapljina enjoyed three hours of good fun, games, socialising and listening to smart and wise things in which they could recognise and identify with each other. Novi Most activities give them a safe place where they can express themselves without being ridiculed, where they can be encouraged to be who they are and not a bad copy of someone else.

### WE ARE NOT SOCKS!

Ivica explains the theme of the teen gathering in Čapljina.

*In Bosnia and Herzegovina we have a saying that we use when we want to say that someone treats people disrespectfully: "you treat people like socks!" As soon as we don't need old socks we take them off and throw them away. That's often how people treat each other, teenagers are no exception. So we decided to make a joint gathering for teenagers called "We are not socks". We wanted to show them how we often treat each other cheaply and superficially, how we don't value friendships enough. Our message to teenagers was: No one likes to be treated like a sock. God looks at us differently, he sees us as valuable and precious.*



*It's always good to take a little time to talk together!*

*Angela and David singing at the young adults meeting.*



*Becca and Indira leading a sock-related game!*

*The end of a great day together. For most of the teens from Jajce it was their first big trip with us.*



Just some of the 800 children who got to see the puppet show in Sarajevo!



## PUPPET SHOWS & SHOEBOXES IN SARAJEVO

The production of this year's puppet show began at the start of December. It was the fourth instalment of the "Detective series" which the team in Sarajevo have been writing over the past few years. This was the first show since the lockdowns so people were very excited to be a part of the creation process again and to get to serve the children that would show up!

The puppet show is performed to pre-recorded audio. The young adults voice-acted the puppet characters they would later perform. The play was called: "The Quest for Jonah's Prophecy" and the team created a catchy song on this theme. The main point was that God is willing to forgive and accept us despite our imperfections and sins and that it is on us to recognise and take responsibility for our actions by repenting.

Looking back on the week of performances Beki said, "We held 8 shows altogether and hosted over 800 children during that time. Suffice it to say, the turnout was amazing and the children were really excited for both the show and the shoeboxes. At times, it was even difficult for actors to hear the play because the children were screaming in excitement! After the shows, a lot of people gave their feedback which overall was very positive. One impression that sticks out is the story told by the mother of an autistic child who is usually extremely hyperactive. She said that she couldn't believe that her son was so amazed that he sat still for the whole show."

Angela, serving as part of the puppet shows for the first time, said: "Even though it was a challenge executing the planned show and surviving over 800 people, it was definitely worth seeing the smiles on children's faces during the shows and when they were receiving their shoeboxes." Vanja, our other new Novi Most scholarship intern, said, "I was very excited to see teenagers willing to serve and participate in puppet play. I love the making and performing of the shows."



Looking at the stage versus looking out from it before the show!



Rowan played with several of her students and conducted the violin group.



Lejla played "Stand Up" at the NM Jajce concert this summer. Here she is playing in the studio.



Lejla recorded her cover of "Stand Up" with Matt during the winter holidays. You can listen to it at [youtube.com/novimostjajce](https://www.youtube.com/novimostjajce)

## CONCERT TIME IN JAJCE!

The Novi Most Jajce end-of-year concert was a packed night in the function room of the town's Cultural Centre. The programme ranged from simple, beginner violin pieces to cover songs by rock bands that Budo is mentoring. Rowan reflects on the benefits of these concerts, "It's always great to see young people overcoming their nerves and performing in front of their friends and family. Some were so encouraged by it that by the end of the concert they were already talking about what they are going to play at the next one!"



## WINTER CAMPS COMING UP!

We have two winter camps planned, one for teens and one for young adults. Both will take place on Jahorina during February. We are looking forward to these times together, teaching snowboarding and being out in the mountains.

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