



IPSIA ACTIVITIES WITH MIGRANTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 2018-2021 REPORT

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On the cover, tea distribution at the Vučjak camp.

On this page, construction works for the tent that serves as a dining hall at the Lipa camp



PREFACE

WHY WE HAVE NOT LOOKED AWAY

In a dramatic year destined to go down in history due to the Covid-19 pandemic, thousands of people from the Middle East and Central Asia have crossed through the Balkans, along the course of the rivers Sava and Drina, as well as through Greece, in an attempt to enter the European Union; seeking freedom, a job and the hope for a better future, they undertake a long and perilous journey, often at the mercy of human traffickers.

Stranded for years in indecent refugee camps, they live marginalised lives, being beaten by police if they try to cross the borders, some die by drowning in rivers, others are suffocated in trucks or injured by landmines, sad vestiges of former military conflict.

These deaths are unfair.

We met these people, these families, in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Serbia and tried to give them back some relief, dignity, social interaction and human contact.

In this report, we would like to share with the public our commitment and activity with the people who travelled along the Balkan route, in the area of Bihać, canton of Una Sana in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 200 kilometres from Trieste as the crow flies. After the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic it was difficult to find the time, means and resources to express and activate international solidarity again.

But it was our duty, and we remain committed to this challenge.

TEXT BY
**MAURO
MONTALBETTI**

IPSIA
President



On the edge of the eastern borders of Europe, a small prison-like universe of camps and refugee centres has been established, a universe overlooking fences and barbed wire, which were built in the illusory attempt to stop suffering people on the run.

I look at their faces and always think, never having the courage to ask, who are they?
Where do they come from? Where did they live? What will happen to them?

"We are the hollow men," wrote the poet T.S. Eliot, "There are no eyes here | In this valley of dying stars | In this hollow valley [...] In this last of meeting places | We grope together."
There is a need for forward-looking and bold policies to tackle epoch-making events that are destined to persist and reoccur over time. But we cannot look away just because the States did.

Scarred, angry, and lost - their faces question us, and all we can do is listen and lend a helping hand.

**We would like to extend
our gratitude to those who
support our activities,
to the Caritas network,
to Ambassador Nicola
Minasi, to Silvia Maraone,
to young volunteers,
and to all of you**

WHERE WE OPERATE

OVERVIEW MAP



“

Some families have been on the road for two or three years, crossing through Turkey, Greece and Serbia, sometimes no longer knowing why they left, or where are they going. They have friends or relatives who relocated to France, Germany, Italy, but they do not have documents yet, and asylum has been denied, so they have lost the desire, or are afraid to ‘play the game’, especially if they have suffered or experienced violence: it takes a while to regain courage, especially for the oldest ones.

”

A reflection by Silvia Maraone, IPSIA's Project Manager, taken from the article "La rotta balcanica dimenticata dopo l'assedio mediatico," (The forgotten Balkan route after the media bombardment) published on www.nuoveradici.world in April 2021

ACTIVITY REPORT 2018-2021



2018

IPSIA, WHICH HAS BEEN OPERATING IN THE UNASANA CANTON (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA-BiH) FOR YEARS, BEGINS ITS INTERVENTION IN FAVOUR OF PEOPLE IN TRANSIT IN APRIL 2018, DURING THE FIRST DAYS OF THE COUNTRY'S MIGRATION "CRISIS".

Our organisation ensured support for the Bihać Red Cross, which suddenly faced an emergency situation, having to manage an abandoned facility - the former Borići student residence - where more than **1,500 people**, including women, children and vulnerable individuals, were staying at the end of September.

During the first six months, the main IPSIA activities alongside the Red Cross

(RC) resulted in four new Italian volunteers collaborating in all RC activities within the Borići camp: ranging from the distribution of meals to the sorting and distribution of clothes, from info-points to data collection. It also worked to align migrants' needs with the institutions capable of meeting them (UNHCR, IOM, and the Bihać Red Cross itself). Volunteers reported a number of instances involving violence and abuse, as well as cases of extreme need and vulnerability. Intermediation was also carried out between the Bihać Red Cross and the Italian associations or NGOs interested in operating in the area. And last but not least, we arranged public relations and press office activities for Italian journalists.

◆ **SUPPORT TO THE RED CROSS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF 1,500 MIGRANTS AT BIHAĆ**

◆
**HOT MEALS
FOR OVER
800 PEOPLE
AT THE
MAKESHIFT
SHELTERS
OF THE
BORIĆI CAMP**

◆ **DISTRIBU-
TION OF
400 CUPS
OF HOT TEA**

Furthermore, in **September of the same year, IPSIA BiH provides material support by purchasing and donating to the Bihać Red Cross first aid medication, hygienic products, baby cribs, tables and benches for the community kitchen. These donations were made possible thanks to the support of Caritas Ambrosiana and Caritas Como.**

Soon after, in **October, IPSIA paid the rent (for the first months) of new spaces used by the Red Cross** as a kitchen and warehouse, **to feed over ◆ 800 people**, who live in makeshift shelters of the Borići camp under terrible conditions. On a regular basis, wood and pots are bought and donated to allow migrants staying there to cook their traditional dishes in the community kitchen of the Borići camp.

Support for the Bihać Red Cross also continued in November 2018, **when a ventilation system was installed in the Red Cross** kitchens, where

more than 1,800 meals are prepared on a daily basis.

On **21 December 2018**, after the temporary closure of the student dormitory, **IPSIA**, with the support of the Lombardy regional coordination of Caritas, **officially began to operate in the larger Bihać camp, that is**, the old Bira refrigerator factory, opening the so-called “Social Café”. The distribution of more than **◆ 400 cups of hot tea requires the staff’s commitment every morning**, from Monday to Friday, in the three-hour break between breakfast and lunch. This is essential to ensure an acceptable standard of living in the camps and to foster relationships and social relations among guests.

The Social Café initiative is mainly aimed at promoting relationships and opportunities to meet and discuss in an environment that is sometimes quite complicated, and in which human relationships tend to dramatically deteriorate.

Open to each and every one and lacking the formal routine of the other camp distributions (both for meals, clothes or other non-food items, the identification card is required, and people are registered,

making operations long and creating queues and waits), the Social Café **succeeds in its intent to bring people together and to ease the ongoing tension that prevails in such a setting.**

🟢 Social activities at the Social Café in Bira TRC (Temporary Reception Centre)



🟢 Sport inclusion day thanks to the Football No Limits project in Bosanska Krupa



2019

OPERATING IN THE BIRA CAMP SINCE DECEMBER 2018, IPSIA, IN ADDITION TO CONTINUOUSLY CARRYING OUT THE AFOREMENTIONED "SOCIAL CAFÉ" ACTIVITY, CONTINUES TO TAKE OTHER ACTIONS AIMED AT SUPPORTING THE MIGRANTS IN TRANSIT IN THE UNA SANA CANTON.

In **February** 2019, in **agreement with the social services office, Save the Children and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), winter clothing (such as boots, jackets, socks, gloves and hats) is purchased** and distributed to the **approximately 200 unaccompanied minors** housed in the "children's area"

of the Bira camp. Furthermore, IPSIA, in coordination with IOM, **purchases a television to be installed in the common room of the camp for the TRC Borići families.**

In **April, IPSIA volunteers participate in the "Ekograđani" city event:**

two days of Cleaning Action in the areas of the Una National Park, cleaning up the paths and roads travelled by migrants when they are captured and rejected by the Croatian police and forced to abandon all personal items in the woods, thus creating piles of clothes, blankets and other objects in the most pristine areas of the Park. **IPSIA supports the event by purchasing cleaning materials and contributing financially**

◆
**DISTRIBUTION
OF
CLOTHING
FOR 200
UNACCOMPANIED
MINORS**

◆
**PURCHASE
OF 1,300
HYGIENE KITS
FOR MEN,
WOMEN,
MINORS AND
CHILDREN**

◆
**800 PEOPLE
ASSISTED IN
THE VUČJAK
CAMP**

to the rental of a garbage truck. At the **end of the month**, in partnership with the municipality, **IPSIA helped to install facilities and open an outdoor gym near the Borići camp**, in a public space which is also accessible to the local population. The aim was to create a space mainly dedicated to men hosted in the camps where they can work out and relieve tension, and to offer a place where the local population and migrant people can meet and mix. **Even the Terra Ferma Clown Association, Clowns Without Borders comes to bring some fun with its playful and juggling activities** at the Bira, Borići and Sedra camps, and along the streets of Bihać.

In **May**, **◆700 hygiene kits for men** (with shampoo/shower gel, and shaving foam) and **◆400 hygiene kits for women** (with shampoo, conditioner, nail clippers, and wipes) are purchased. Moreover, **◆160 hygiene kits for children** (including shampoo/shower gel,

and toothpaste) and **◆40 hygiene kits for children** (with wipes and shower gel) to be partly distributed in the Bira camp in collaboration with the local Red Cross team which provided assistance to people staying in the Vučjak camp.

Given the constant inflow of people into the Una Sana Canton and that it is not possible to accommodate them in the IOM camps, in **June** the Municipality of Bihać opened a new **makeshift camp in the town of Vučjak**, seven kilometres from the border with Croatia. The camp is managed by the local Red Cross which **◆assists around 800 people on a daily basis**, providing two meals a day (breakfast and lunch) and distributing basic supplies (clothes, hygiene products, blankets and sleeping bags).

IPSIA took action in this regard by financing the construction of outdoor showers and by distributing cold drinks or hot tea.

On 29 July, as part of the

IPSIA Football No Limits project - which since 2016 provides for itinerant sport and entertainment camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina every summer, and which aims to overcome cultural barriers by playing football, promoting children's right to play -

● **41 minors staying in the Bira and Borici camps were involved in the day of sports activities in Bosanska Krupa,**

encouraging interaction and meeting with local young people as a time for getting together, socialising, promoting healthy growth and educational development. The activity was organised in collaboration with IOM, the social services of Bihać and Save the Children.

In summer, IPSIA also hosted 10 Italian volunteers thanks to the Terre e Libertà project, which offered the opportunity to volunteer for two weeks in different Balkan areas during winter and summer months. Volunteers were trained and supported IPSIA BiH operators

in the daily activities of the Social Café and in the Vučjak camp, offering them hands-on experience with migrants, strengthening the activities and exchanging ideas with the local staff.

On 23 September, the IPSIA volunteers, together with the local Planinarsko Društvo Runolist Bihać association and the volunteers of the Italian association called Via Scalabrini 3, **took part in a new Cleaning Action of the paths travelled by migrants to Croatia.**

A few days later, **on 29 September, a day involving ● 50 unaccompanied foreign minors staying in Bira TRC was organised in the Una National Park,** with the aim of offering young migrants and refugees the opportunity to spend a day in nature, out of the camps, favouring socialisation through sport and entertainment activities. The activities also continued in **October**, when, thanks to the collaboration of For a Better

●
SPORTS ACTIVITIES FOR 41 CHILDREN

●
50 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS SPEND A DAY IN THE UNA NATIONAL PARK



● **AMONG THE PROPOSED ACTIVITIES: REALISING MURALS, CRAFT WORKSHOPS, ITALIAN AND ENGLISH CLASSES, FILM SCREENINGS, SPORTS**

World association, **murals are created inside the Bira** camp, thus embellishing the areas where migrants live.

In **November**, some afternoon activities were integrated into the events related to the Social Café; from Monday to Friday afternoon
● **camp guests were offered participation in**

craft workshops, Italian and English classes, film screenings and finally sports activities.

Also in November 2019, the **IPSIA staff took part in the #Discover training course**, held in Sremski Karlovci as part of the Erasmus Plus programme. Here operators and volunteers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Italy, Serbia and

Albania met to analyse together the issues related to the Balkan route and informal education.

In December, IPSIA also began operating in the Sedra camp TRC, a former hotel that mainly hosts families and unaccompanied minors. Terre e Libertà Winter project volunteers carried out **creative play activities for youngsters and workshops for female asylum seekers at Sedra TRC for two weeks**. These activities aimed at building a space for socialisation that would allow the camp guests to take advantage of a wide range of projects and better develop their personality. A number of workshops were held for women, including those involving handcrafts and Christmas decorations. With the children, on the other hand, creative play workshops and outdoor games were organised. A Christmas party was also held for all the camp guests and the staff of the various organisations operating in the camp.


By the end of the year another party was held at the Bira camp, **this time to celebrate the anniversary of the Social Café opening**.

In 2019, over **200,000 cups of tea (600 per day)** were distributed, in addition to the artistic, recreational and sports/gym activities implemented within it. To celebrate, a concert with the camp guests was also organised.

◆
**DISTRIBUTION
OF 200,000
CUPS OF TEA
(600 PER DAY)**



Construction of
community kitchens
at the Lipa camp

The background image shows a person in a Caritas uniform, with a red cross and 'Caritas' logo on their sleeve, pointing their right index finger towards a wall. On the wall, there is a large blue 'a' logo and a red and blue shield-shaped logo with a cross and the letters 'ACI'.

A close-up glimpse of borders and hopes


THE STORY OF
CHIARA AND SILVIA

Our IPSIA volunteer experience began in October 2020, when we contacted Silvia Maraone, asking her if they needed on-site help in their activities with migrants for a few months. In fact, we both had some experience with IPSIA in the Balkans but never for a long time, then, in the uncertainty of the pandemic, we decided to take this opportunity to do something new. Since then, a few months went by before we were able to leave. With the border closures, it had become very difficult to reach Bosnia and Herzegovina due to the total lack of public transport to the country. Moreover, at the end of December, the fire which destroyed the Lipa camp and the doubts about the fate of the migrants further delayed our arrival, since we were waiting to find out how the situation would evolve.

But we did not lose heart and finally arrived in Bihać at the beginning of February 2021, thanks to our trusty Fiat Panda, a car not getting any younger but it still runs pretty well.

Here we were welcomed, as well as by Silvia, by the local staff and Eleonora, with whom we also shared a beautiful house along the Una river - one of the most beautiful rivers in the Balkans.

After receiving all the required documents, we started



our activities in the camps. During the first few days we started working at the Sedra camp, about 15 minutes from Bihać, which hosts families, women and unaccompanied minors.

It is an old hotel, Yugoslavian style, and some parts of it are a bit run-down. Here IPSIA has opened a Social Café, that is a small meeting centre where we distribute hot tea every day and do activities with the camp guests, such as workshops with children and women, creative and play games with children and hold Italian classes for adults.

The importance of these activities was clear from the first weeks: for many migrants the camp becomes a sort of limbo, where the days are all the same, while uncertainty over the continuation of a journey full of dangers turns into an endless wait.

This leads to depression, addiction to psychotropic drugs and overall deterioration of mental health, first and foremost among minors and young people. This is dramatically evident not only from their stories, but also from the numerous acts of self-harm we have witnessed. Even though the children are lively and eager to play like everyone else, they also bear the psychological scars of a migratory path marked by violence and the consequences of a childhood spent without regular education or learning.

For all these reasons, IPSIA actions aim to give them back a degree of “normality”, offering hobbies to young people and involving children in games and artistic activities which, on the one hand, distract them from the reality of the camp, even for a short time and, on the other, provide a sort of non-formal education. After a few weeks, we also started going to the Lipa


Distribution of hot
tea in Lipa, together
with the Red Cross



The Social Café
kiosk at Bira TRC

ipsia






camp, where only adult men are hosted. Here, after the fire in December 2020, tents and chemical toilets were installed. Only a small amount of electricity is supplied by generators and there is no running water.

Thanks to donations from Italy and collaboration with Caritas and the local Red Cross, IPSIA was able to build three tents, used to house eating facilities and mosques. Furthermore, a few weeks ago community kitchens, where migrants can cook their meals, have been set up. Here too, in fact, the aim of IPSIA is to create a sense of normalcy in this challenging environment.

The impact with the camp was rather traumatic at first: Lipa, in fact, is located on a completely isolated and deserted plateau, swept by strong winds and experiences more freezing temperatures than those in the already cold Bihać; in the middle of this grey and empty clearing are the tents that house almost a thousand migrants inside. Here too, we started distributing hot tea and involving migrants in recreational activities, such as board games, outdoor sports (badminton, cricket and volleyball) and artistic workshops. In a few days, we found some beautiful people, who not only greatly appreciate what we do, but also help us and passionately collaborate in our activities.

We never imagined finding so many grateful smiles in Lipa. And what a satisfaction to see them build beautiful kites with the material we brought and make them fly high up in the sky!

Their enthusiasm also reminded us of how, despite the long journey, trials and tribulations that made them look older, most of them are no more than 25 years old and probably started their journey when they were still underage.



Furthermore, at Lipa, we witnessed the consequences of numerous pushbacks on a daily basis. Unfortunately, many go back to Lipa with signs of violence perpetrated by the Croatian police. In addition to the physical injury, which is sometimes very serious, the trauma of not understanding why they were subjected to such unmotivated violence is evident in them. With IPSIA, we then began to collect testimonials of the pushbacks and post them on the Border Violence Monitoring Network website, hoping that this would lead to greater awareness of what is happening and help actually change the situation. As a matter of fact, what we ask ourselves every day is what is in store for these people, who have been trapped in limbo for years with the only hope of one day being able to escape the violence of the border police and reach Europe. For many, by now, this goal has become increasingly dim and derailed by the physical and psychological consequences of the violence they suffered.

What does the future hold in store for these people?

What support can they expect?

Chiara and Silvia

Make up for children
at Sedra TRC





2020

Terre e Libertà winter camp ends in early January 2020.

In **February**, in addition to ordinary sports and psychosocial activities, the **IPSIA staff is at work in the kitchen to whip up some desserts at Borići**. The camp guests also have the chance to **celebrate carnival**. Moreover, at the end of the month, thanks to the collaboration of the For a Better World association, a **mural is also being crafted inside the Bira camp**, thus embellishing the spaces where migrants live.

In March, due to newly introduced anti-Covid-19 measures, the staff suspended psychosocial activities and only

continued the distribution of tea within the Bira camp, that came under lockdown. Furthermore, the staff is committed to **disseminating useful information to contain the spread of the virus** by sharing the Refugee-Corona Information Resource page on Facebook. Starting from the end of the month, **the staff** - in collaboration with IOM - **started shopping for the people living in the Bira and Borići camps** to buy them comfort items to which they could not access since the camp was under lockdown.

In **April**, thanks to the collaboration with Caritas Ambrosiana, and as part of the Solidarity Gifts project, **the IPSIA staff bought and distributed** ● **1,668**

●
**1,668 PACKS
OF SU-
GAR AND
TEA WERE
PURCHASED
FOR BIRA'S
GUESTS**

THE PROPOSED ACTIVITIES: A NEW VEGETABLE GARDEN, AN INFORMATION CAMPAIGN ON THE "GAME", AN AWARENESS AND PREVENTION CAMPAIGN ON COVID-19, SPORTS TOURNAMENTS, PLAY ACTIVITIES

packs of sugar and tea to Bira guests, chocolate eggs to Borići and Sedra guests, and kits including underwear, socks, T-shirts and trousers to minors in Sedra. Starting on April 29, in the Bira camp water and dates were served every day until the end of the Ramadan timespan, to be consumed as part of the Iftar meal.

On 11 May, IPSIA, together with IOM BiH, implemented a **new activity** within the Borići camp: **a vegetable garden for the guests, who directly managed it.** Normal psychosocial activities in the Bira camp were gradually resumed from mid-May. At the end of May, in collaboration with IOM BiH, **IPSIA took over the management of the community kitchens in the Bira camp. IPSIA concurrently launched an information campaign aimed at advising people who intended to play the "game" of the risks associated with a new border policy,**

the so-called "informal readmissions" in effect at Italian borders. Furthermore, the staff is also committed to document, together with ASGI, the chain pushbacks initiated by the Italian border police.

On **2 June**, in the Bira camp, the **IPSIA staff celebrated the establishment of the Italian Republic by serving not only tea, but also pizza**, through co-financing from the Italian Embassy in Sarajevo. In June, a **further awareness and prevention campaign about the spread of Covid-19**, financed by the Italian Episcopal Conference, was held. With the help of camp guests, **benches and tables of Bira's community kitchens**, a space that guests increasingly use, are painted. By the end of the month, in collaboration with other organisations operating in the Bira camp (CWS, Zene Sa Une and IOM), **IPSIA launched sports tournaments and collective recreational activities for the camp guests.**



◆
**THE EVENTS:
MASTERCHEF
BIRA, CLEA-
NING ACTION**

◆
**A NEW
PROJECT:
UNA TOGHE-
TER**

In **July** two **local boys** **were also hired as staff members**. Together with the ordinary activities, the staff also organised the **first round of a cooking competition among the guests -**

◆ **Masterchef Bira**, which also saw the participation of IOM BiH and DRC members as judges - and painted some benches and a table to embellish the space outside the Social Café kiosk.

The second round of Masterchef Bira was held on 7 August. This time the participants (including staff members of some organisations operating in the camp) were asked to prepare desserts, to be turned in to a jury made up of both guests and operators.

On 19 August IPSIA started up the ◆ Una Together project, co-financed by IOM, which included a set of **activities aimed at putting the migrant population in contact with the local community**. The next day, on 20 August, the staff also staged the first **Cleaning**

Action near the Jedinstvo stadium in Bihać, involving both Bira and Borići guests, as well as the local association GSS Stanica Bihać and the youth association AsuBiH. A few days later a questionnaire aimed at gauging awareness of the “migrant crisis” of the local population and better understanding their reactions was also released.

On **4 September**, in collaboration with CWS, Zene Sa Une and IOM, **the IPSIA staff organised an afternoon of music and entertainment within the Bira camp, known as ◆ “Luna Park Bira”**.

September 11 was a time to **play cricket** at Bira, and then volleyball on September 18; CWS, Zene Sa Une, Save the Children and IOM took part in arranging the above-mentioned tournaments, within the framework of the Una Together project.

September 30, 2020 was a memorable date: the Bira camp was closed by decision of the Cantonal Government. The camp

guests were transferred to the Lipa facility, an Emergency Tent Camp opened in April due to the Covid-19 emergency and managed by IOM. Others would be moved to the Blažuj single men camp near Sarajevo.

On **5 October 2020**, the **new Social Corner** was opened by Caritas Italy, Caritas Bosnia and the Sarajevo Youth Pastoral Centre, **in the Ušivak family camp** - near Sarajevo - thanks to a donation by Pope Francis.

In October 2020 five initiatives were also organised as part of the Una Together project: **three exchange and sharing meetings between the teenagers** of the Borići camp and locals, a **cricket tournament** in the Lipa camp and a **workshop on safety in the mountains** - in collaboration with the GSS Stanica Bihać association - again in the Lipa camp. On **October 16, the IPSIA staff began tea distribution activities and the usual**

psychosocial activities in the Lipa camp. At the **end of the month** - in collaboration with Caritas Italy - **IPSIA opened a new Social Corner in the Sedra family camp**, near Cazin, thanks to a donation by Pope Francis in support of the migrant population in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

IPSIA activities also continued in November: under the umbrella of the Una together project, **two football tournaments** were held with local children and the Sedra camp guests (one inside the camp and one in the Ostrožac school), **a football tournament in Lipa, a photographic workshop and an ecological workshop in Bihać with Borići teenagers, a Cleaning Action in Lipa, and a gender equality workshop** with some local women as well as women and girls from the Sedra camp.

In **December**, the staff held another event under the Una Together project, **namely**

NEW SOCIAL CORNERS WERE OPENED IN UŠIVAK AND SEDRA

◆
**LIPA CAMP
BURNS.
SUPPORT
PROVIDED
TO 1,500
HOMELESS
MIGRANTS**

**a guided tour of the
Ostrožac** Castle with children
from both the local community
and the Sedra camp.

**In December, IPSIA also
took part in several
distributions:** three
organised with Salam Aldeen
- Team Humanity, the first in
the Borići camp, the second
in Lipa and the third in Sedra,
one with Olvidados also in
Lipa, to distribute **tuna** and
thermal pants, and finally a
**distribution of Christmas
parcels in the Centre for
social welfare in Bihać**, in
favour of the poorest people of
the local community.

◆ **December 23 marked
another key event. The
Lipa camp, during the
closure by IOM, caught
fire. Nearly 1,500 people
were left homeless,without food and water in
the camp ruins, sleeping in
temporary shelters. In the
following days, IPSIA
actively supported the
Bihać Red Cross in its
activities in favour of the
population who stayed
in Lipa, purchasing and
distributing essential
items.**

2021

At the **beginning of January 2021**, the management of the Lipa camp (until then called Emergency Tent Camp, or ETC) was reassigned from the IOM to the Service for Foreigners Affairs, the agency for foreigners of the Bosnian government. The tents burnt during the fire in December 2020 were replaced by some structures provided by the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

IPSIA organised distributions of both non-food and food items, with the help of the local Red Cross, a partner in the city of Bihać.

Together with Salam Aldeen - Team Humanity, distributions of food parcels were also **organised for the Sedra and Borići camps. Psychosocial activities at**

the Sedra camp and the activities of the Social Café continued to be held on a regular basis, offering creative and craft-oriented workshops.

The customary purchase and distribution of clothes (jackets, shoes) and **food items** (such as water bottles) at the Lipa camp also continued, in collaboration with the Bihać Red Cross. At the end of January, thanks to the donations collected by IPSIA and Caritas Ambrosiana, **the access road to Lipa was repaved.**

Thanks to donations from Italy, in **February 2021** several structures in the Lipa MC (makeshift camp) were opened: a **restaurant tent** (20x30 metres), where the Bihać and Cantonal Red Cross served two hot meals per

◆
**SUNDRY
STRUCTURES
OPENED: A
RESTAURANT
TENT AND 2
MULTIFUNC-
TIONAL
TENTS**



day and where the activities of the IPSIA Social Café resumed; **a multifunctional tent (10 x 20 metres) used for Covid-19** quarantine and established thanks to Caritas Ambrosiana; **another multifunctional tent (10 x 20 metres) used as a prayer room/mosque** and realised thanks to the Federation of Evangelic Churches in Italy. The restaurant tent was equipped with heating and electrical connection thanks to the purchase of a generator, courtesy of the Rivolti ai Balcani network.

The Social Café in Lipa was opened at the end of February and saw the daily distribution of at least **● 350 cups of hot tea** (about 100 litres), together with the activities held in the Social Café. In support of the Bihać Red Cross, **the facilities for the new industrial kitchen, a transport van, uniforms and T-shirts, PCs and IT equipment were purchased, and a video surveillance system was installed in the new**

kitchens. In addition, activities continue as part of the Una Together project, in partnership with IOM, including integration **activities between the young camp guests and the local population.** These saw the participation of a group of local young people who led a **local folkdance workshop.**

In **mid-March** 2021, the construction of community kitchens (through joint efforts by IPSIA and FCEI), where camp guests can cook local dishes on their own, was completed; in fact, distributions of food parcels (with raw materials for cooking) and wood were organised. Furthermore, the **distribution of hygiene kits was planned.**

Thanks to the contributions of the Vik Utopia Foundation - created in 2012 in memory of Vittorio Arrigoni - **a gazebo for minors was created in the Sedra camp.** This space is dedicated to unaccompanied minors and young people in general and includes a ping pong and a football table. **Among the activities**

●
**350 CUPS
OF HOT TEA
DISTRIBUTED
IN THE NEW
SOCIAL CAFÉ
IN LIPA**

◆
4 MICRO-PROJECTS TO PROMOTE TOURISM

in favour of the community, IPSIA signed a collaboration agreement with the local Tourist Board for the implementation of

◆ **4 micro-projects:**

reclamation of the Jotani green area with the construction of wooden gazebos, benches and walkways, the landscaping of the green memorial area of Garavice which involved planting of over 3,000 new trees, shrubs and bushes, building a playground for children, with a focus on including those with disabilities, and setting up a beach volleyball court near the city centre in order to let young people access it.

IPSIA and Caritas Ambrosiana also supported the Bihać

hospital by purchasing medicine, an ambulance, and a resuscitation trolley. In support of the needs of the Service for Foreigner Affairs (SFA), **IPSIA also purchased a vehicle for transport from Lipa to Bihać and 600 metres of tarp to create a protection**

between the tents and the camp, thus giving Lipa guests greater privacy. **IPSIA, together with Caritas Italy has also supported the activities of the newly formed the U Pokretu association**, for the creation of a multifunctional youth centre.

From May 2021, **IPSIA started to implement the project Actions in Response to the Migrant Emergency at the Lipa Refugee Camp, in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, funded

by the Intesa-San Paolo Charity Fund, which will expire in July 2021.

In particular, this intervention involves purchasing and distributing hygiene kits (soap, razors, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and wet wipes); the distribution of tools and pots to be used in the community kitchens built by IPSIA together with FCEI; the periodic distribution of food parcels to allow the guests to independently cook food which is compatible with their origin, culture and religious



12 SHOWERS
AND 7 SINKS
OPENED
AT THE LIPA
CAMP

beliefs; the water supply of 7,000 litres of drinking water that is distributed through tank trucks; the purchase and distribution of T-shirts, clothes and tracksuits for people isolated for health reasons, i.e. suffering from scabies or other severe and highly contagious dermatological diseases; distribution of masks and hand sanitising gels used for Covid prevention.

In **June 2021**, **12 showers and 7 sinks** were opened inside the Lipa camp. This action involved building a wooden structure and connecting outdoor showers and sinks which are supplied through 5 tanks with 1,000 litres capacity each. In addition to the 5 tanks, two other tanks were made available for multiple use (for example, refuelling cans and refilling bottles) not connected



Outdoor showers and sinks at the Lipa temporary camp

to the system, for a total of 7,000 litres of additional drinking water provided to the camp every day. This action was carried out thanks to the support of Caritas Como, Caritas Ambrosiana and Caritas Italy, which donated a new tank truck to the city of Bihać. In June, in collaboration with Caritas Ambrosiana, **● IPSIA also hosted in Bihać Pimpa the Clown,**

who for 5 days entertained the children from Sedra and Borići camps and the town of Bihać, allowing them to have fun and smile, but above all he taught magic tricks to the children from the Lipa camp.

●
**5 DAYS WITH
PIMPA THE
CLOWN**



● Pimpa the Clown at the Lipa temporary camp

WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO

THE WORK OF IPSIA, FROM THE BALKANS TO THE WORLD

We are the non-governmental organization promoted by the Christian Associations of Italian Workers (ACLI), founded in 1985 to transform experiences and values of popular associations into international cooperation projects.

Since 1985 we have been promoting activities which combine associationism, training - both professional and non-professional - and social development, building bonds of solidarity between peoples. IPSIA has operated along the migration route of the Western Balkans since 2015 and in particular since Spring 2018 - when this route shifted with the beginning of the migrant emergency in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a place where we have been working for more than 20 years - we have supported the local Red Cross in distributing hot meals, establishing an info-point for the management and distribution of clothes and aid, as well as organising activities and workshops with children in the Borići Refugee Camp.

In December 2018, we opened the so-called Čaj Corner within the Bira TRC in Bihać, later we did the same in Sedra and Lipa.

These "tea corners" are places where operators and volunteers distribute hot drinks every day and promote recreational, sports and entertainment activities for asylum seekers. The goal is to improve the quality of the time that these people are forced to spend in the TRCs during their migratory journey and to bring a message of solidarity and human closeness, so that it gives back, to people who have lost everything during these years of travelling in inhuman conditions, some degree of dignity.

Aside from their support in the camps, our operators work alongside a few local volunteers in preparing and distributing different kits containing food, clothes, sleeping bags, sanitary materials, for people forced to live outside the camps, such as in Lipa and in other emergency situations.

The living conditions of thousands of migrants, who from the lager-like camps in Greece go through the Balkans, are terrible and constantly deteriorating. Violations of human rights, abuses, violence by local police and population towards migrants, including women and children forced to live on the ground, outdoors, and walk thousands of kilometres, are a constant issue related to this land route.

To help us continue supporting our work, you are kindly requested to:

- Talk about these situations even when the media spotlight dims, by reading, inquiring and telling the story of those who undertake the migratory journey;
- Follow our social updates:
www.facebook.com/ipsia.acli
www.facebook.com/IPSIA.BIH
www.instagram.com/ipsia_bih/

If you would like to support our work in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also in Albania, Kosovo, Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal and Somalia, you can visit the website sostieni.ipsia-acli.it or make a donation via:

● **Credit card, PayPal or Satispay** su sito sostieni.ipsia-acli.it

● **Bank transfer:**

BANCA POPOLARE ETICA
IBAN: IT35S0501803200000011014347
PAYABLE TO: IPSIA
BIC Swift Code: CCRIT2T84A

● **Postal account:**

Number: 1051449377
Payable to: Istituto Pace Sviluppo Innovazione ACLI - IPSIA
Postal transfer: IT60C07601600001051449377

We thank you once again and in advance for your attention and your generosity,

IPSIA staff

IPSIA ACTIVITIES WITH MIGRANTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

2018-2021 REPORT

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