



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

PUBLIC BUDGET CONSULTATIONS IN SOMBOR

We all have a say, we all decide!



You can watch a movie about the initiative here:

<https://youtu.be/Pf5HEYNoIGc>

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BACKGROUND

USAID Government Accountability Initiative and the City of Sombor have enabled the participation of high school students in public consultations on the 2020 budget. In 2019, an initiative was launched creating a first-time opportunity for students to define projects they consider important for improving the work and stay at school, to vote on proposals and select the projects they deem most needed. The results of the vote were sent to the City Government for consideration and inclusion of the projects in the budget.

WHY DID WE LAUNCH THE INITIATIVE?

Lack of confidence and low level of civic activism is a chronic problem in local communities. Citizens are not convinced that local authorities want to hear from them, and ways of inviting citizens to participate are often outdated and do not fit the modern lifestyle. The result is a widening gap between local authorities and citizens – authorities remain without the information on the priorities and needs of citizens, while citizens do not perceive their representatives as acting on interests of the citizens and improving the quality of their lives. These issues are especially present with young people, as their work and life are increasingly taking place in the virtual world, away from the process of real decision making and the possibility of their voice being heard.

HOW DID WE CARRY IT OUT?

USAID Government Accountability Initiative and the City of Sombor have initiated the involvement of young people by voting for projects through **student parliaments** which represent students in all grades, understand peer needs and problems, and know how to motivate and encourage fellow students to take action. In five secondary schools, student parliaments formulated between four and six activities that would enhance the teaching process and improve students' time spent at school. Based on the proposals, ballots were drawn up and voting organized on November 7, 2019. Along with the preparation, a campaign was conducted to inform the students about this initiative. The campaign was organized on social media as the channel used most widely by young people. More than 80% of students participated in voting. Based on the results of the voting, the projects were ranked according to the percentage of votes received. Each school sent an initiative to the City Government to consider funding projects based on the results of the vote.

WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

On December 18, the City of Sombor adopted a budget for 2020 and allocated 500,000 dinars for each school, to fund projects that students proposed and ranked by their votes. The projects will be implemented in 2020, and they include renovation of school toilets, purchase of air conditioners, acquisition of equipment for training through practice and equipment for leisure activities of students. In the coming years, the City of Sombor will continue to organize this type of direct involvement of students in formulating project proposals to be funded from the local budget, while Project will use this experience as model for other local governments.

High school student inclusion in budget consultations promotes youth activism in local community and builds confidence in democratic decision-making processes. Students will quickly be able to see the results of their vote as soon as their schools get what the students have asked for and defined as the most important. In this way, young people also learn about the ways in which it is necessary and possible to influence and control local government and make it closer to citizens, their interests and needs.