



ASSESSING THE CAPACITY OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Women Human Right Advocates



Funded by
the European Union



Foundation for Women's Empowerment
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Fondacija za osnaživanje žena
Bosna i Hercegovina

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Assessing the capacity of women's organizations at the local level

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Acronyms

CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CSW - Center for Social Work

HC - Health Center

EU - European Union

GAP BiH - Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina

GREVIO - Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

IPA - Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance

LAP - Local Action Plan

NGO - Non-governmental organization

TK - Tuzla Canton

UN - United Nations

WA - Women's Association



About the Project

During the implementation of the Project “Women Human Rights Advocates” funded by the European Union and implemented by the CURE Foundation (CURE) and the Foundation for Women’s Empowerment (FWE), we intend to contribute to the promotion and respect of women’s rights through programs that encourage women and young women to take affirmative action in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination in BiH with a special focus on minority and marginalized groups of women in ten (10) municipalities.

The duration of the Project is envisaged to be 24 months. In that period, we will work on strengthening the capacity of ten (10) organizations, as well as on making recommendations to institutions at the local level for the better position of women.

Project Action activities aim to strengthen capacities of the WCSOs, women human rights defenders and democracy activists (‘right-holders’), by providing them with coaching and peer learning, to enable them to have organizational capacities and knowledge to advocate for positive changes in seeking to address the issues of discrimination, exclusion and marginalization of women. The target beneficiaries of the Project are 10 WCSOs, which are representing the marginalized and vulnerable groups, and at least 30 women and girls human rights defenders and democracy activists who plan to work on increasing of their capacities and knowledge in initiating local measures and creating concrete opportunities for inclusion of the women belonging to marginalized and vulnerable groups. They will also be engaged in policy dialogue with state officials ‘duty-bearers’ to remind them to meet their obligations and lobby them for full respect of the laws and strategies that BiH is obligated to implement.

Objectives of the Project are promotion and protection of women human rights, through the actions aiming at fostering the participation of women in fighting against discrimination in all its forms in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and to strengthen the capacities of women civil society organizations (WCSO), democracy activists and human rights defenders working on women human rights and democracy issues with a focus on women belonging to marginalized and vulnerable groups in BiH.

Research methodology

Regarding the aforementioned main goals of the project (promotion and protection of women's rights) there are also goals pertaining to creating and implementing research in which the main purpose is to serve as a platform for planning further activities of empowerment and strengthening the capacity of non-governmental organizations devoted to women's issues as well as activists in their struggle for human rights on a local level. The analysis is mainly based upon an assessment of capacity (legal, technical, infrastructural, and personnel-related) of non-governmental organizations that address women's issues in local communities, and on presenting practical experiences and stories of women's involvement and specific roles. In addition, it is presented accessible advocacy material and regulations for improving the status of women from marginalized groups: national minorities, returnees, women with disabilities, unemployed women, and members of the LGBT population, with a particular emphasis on young women as pillars of change in their local communities.

The project goals and further purpose of the research centers upon the analysis of the interviews and conversations with organizations in order to determine the capacity and the reach of influence, the recognized needs for further development, and means of strengthening the possibilities of action. The interviews work to illustrate the personal experiences, wishes, and lives of women and their motives to organize. Furthermore, they collectively tell a story about a shared vision and the significance of organizational influence on women as well as on local community. Interviews with activists and representatives of non-governmental organizations were held over Zoom and Google Meet platforms.

The interviews were conducted with predetermined topics which shaped the conversations, allowing the flow of conversations to steer towards revealing the relevance of the interviewees themselves. The main topics included were: organization and outreach considerations (such as membership, technical capacity of the organization [e.g., whether they have strategical documents and guidelines for their activities in their community], communication and cooperation with institutions, and how messages are being sent to the institutions [e.g., Centers for social welfare, health institutions, police and justice institutions, etc.]); the living conditions of women in their communities (such as the availability of running water, electricity, utility infrastructure, means of transport, and communication systems); the levels and extent of gender-based violence and their ability to address the matter; access to education and economic status (including equality in entrepreneurship and hiring); political involvement of women in local communities; and media relationships, the possibility of public media appearance, and opportunities to make their voices heard.

We chose ten non-government organizations pertaining to women's issues, each with different goals and aspirations and different reaches of influence, from local organizations founded to promote women's handiwork and handicrafts who were able to widen their influence all the way to politics directly impacting decision makers, to the organization whose primary objective is the direct fight for women's human rights. Interviews were conducted with women representing from rural areas, Roma minority women, long-term unemployed women, and women with disabilities, each shared their perspectives based

upon personal experience and their knowledge about women in marginalized groups gained from their involvement within the organization. The chosen organizations were: The Organization for Civil Psychological Centre Sense (Banja Luka), Association of Citizens “Probudi se” (Istočno Sarajevo), the Women Association “Female Vision” (Tuzla), “Active Women Donje Moštre” (Visoko), “Maja Kravica” (Bratunac), “Romkinje” (Bijeljina), “Pašinke” along with “Sigurno Mjesto” (Zavidovići), “Nera” (Konjic), “Vrba” (Mostar), and “Srce i Duša” (Prokosovići, Lukavac).

Reflecting the previously established aims of the research focused on strengthening the capacity and empowering activists toward fighting for women’s human rights on local levels, the organizations selected were each relatively young associations who struggle in light of existing hierarchies that favors better-known, more popular associations and organizations with more established histories. Smaller associations and organizations may be seen as less relevant or impactful, lessening the recognition they receive for their achievements and roles in local communities. Because of this, lesser-known associations and organizations need more cooperation and support in order to strengthen and maintain their influence and their status in society. The analysis of the interviews and the stories of the activists, told from the organizational perspective, depict the local levels in which these groups act.

As a supplement for understanding the local context and possibilities for actions, this research also includes an analysis of legislative and legal documents, relevant to all sorts of aspects of life on local levels, placing a focus on the implications for marginalized groups and the improvement of women’s status.

In order to establish more relevant picture of the representation of gender questions in targeted local communities, except legal and strategical legislative that only partly provides us with the insight in the conditions of women in local community, we conducted and directed questionnaires targeted to representatives of municipal and city authorities, centers for social work and health institutions in local community. The purpose of these questionnaires is to provide us with the information on how representatives of institutions approach the questions of gender equality, do they accomplish cooperation with NGOs and what is the overall condition and status of women in these different areas. We created and distributed the questionnaire for the institutions with a twofold intention: first, to analyze the answers from the institutions about specific roles and status of women from marginalized groups in order to understand the ways in which their statuses are being perceived and incorporated into the policies and practices of these institutions. Second, by sending these questionnaires to selected institutions in ten different municipalities, we aimed to test their respective willingness to join initiatives and efforts, their openness to communicate, and their data transparency. Upon collecting the surveys, we analyzed the questionnaires according to the two main goals.

The questionnaires were sent directly to the institution by our research team using the addresses available on their official website. Corresponding with other research interests, questionnaires were then passed to certain organizations for further distribution inside their local municipality to be able to analyze the responses and see the cooperation of institutions with the research team, as well as with the selected organizations in that municipality. The questions from the questionnaire created for these particular institutions are regarding practices, regulation and local politics on the subject of how to improve the status of women from marginalized groups, as well as analyzing the working conditions in these mentioned institutions from their perspective. Considering the short timetable

and restrictions of direct meetings and travel due to the epidemiological situation, for data collection and analysis within the research we have narrowed our focus on three public institutions and those are: Centers for Social Work, Central Health institutions in local communities, and city/municipal services, with the aim to cover main strategical political and administrative centers of affairs on local level as well as covering the question of efficacy of a system of social care.

Legal analysis of available documents for action

Women are not a homogeneous group and their everyday life, their status and exercise of their rights are conditioned by gender, place of living, age, religious and political affiliation as well as other characteristics that makes them even more vulnerable. This actually means that some particular groups of women are discriminated against, more than men and women from regular population.

Obstacles that members of these groups are facing, whether because of personal characteristics or other reason, such as opinions from their environment is recognized as crucial factor of exclusion of certain groups and their social discrimination. These unequal possibilities for all of the members of society leads to discrimination fore mostly affecting women as individuals and as members of certain groups. The discrimination against them is done by institutions as well as their environment. In both international and domestic regulation, the discrimination on multiple grounds and long-term discrimination is recognized as severe case of violence (multiple, extended repeated discrimination and victimization¹).

Considering the fact that the purpose of this analysis is to provide advocacy material to organizations on local level, we will try to adjust the analysis of International and domestic legal and legislative questions to fit our needs of actions on protection of human rights on local level.

General international acts that offer protection of human rights were introduced in the middle of 20th century, and shortly after that, as the conscience on question of marginalized groups, causes and repercussions grew, additional legally non-binding documents followed (resolutions, declarations etc.). These document's major purpose was to give guidelines to states and to serve somewhat as a pressure on states to increase the level of protection. Chronologically after that certain binding conventions were introduced along with mechanisms for protections of vulnerable groups. The significance of these documents for our analysis lies in a possibility of individuals or civil associations to act on local level.

International documents, or documents adopted by the United Nations and the Council of Europe are incorporated in the annex of Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) already in its preamble establishes the commitment for states tarty to Declaration, to insure practical application of basic human rights. Article 2. states that it is inevitable to ensure that everyone is entitled to these rights no matter of their race, skin color, gender, language, ethnicity, religion, political or any other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. The Declaration states that everyone has the same right on protection from discrimination or incentives to discriminate. Although the Declaration is non-binding act it is considered to be base upon which other documents are adopted on various levels.

¹ Definition from the Law on Gender Equality, Article 7, which reads: Victimisation as a form of discrimination shall exist when one person or group of persons is put into less favorable position due to rejection of instruction to act discriminatory, report discrimination, testify in procedure of protection from discrimination based on gender or if this person has been in any way involved into the procedure initiated because of discrimination based on gender.

Based on this Declaration an International Covenant was adopted in 1967 regarding to economic, social and cultural rights as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that concretize the principles of the UN Declaration.

Article 2. of the Constitution that guarantees human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina invoked on the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms with its protocols (Council of Europe 1950), prescribes direct implementation of these rights within Bosnia and Herzegovina with superiority over other laws. This Declaration guarantees basic human and fundamental rights without discrimination (article 14.) and introduces the European Commission of Human Rights and European Court of Human Rights as monitoring and protection authorities.

Every individual, NGO or citizen's association are permitted to submit complaint of endangerment of their rights from the side of the state. It is important to emphasize that the European Court of Human Rights will take the case to judicial proceeding only after all of the internal legal measures are utilized and within 6 months after final court decision is made, but only if the request of the party is in tune with provisions of the Convention. Bosnia and Herzegovina ratified Protocol No. 12 (General prohibition of violence) that enabled them to proceed with procedure on protection from discrimination even in cases of breaking the rights that are not protected under the Convention. There is a possibility of court settlement between sides in proceedings.

The ruling of the Court of Human Rights obliges states and sets precedent for future cases. Overseeing committees have a role of observers in implementation of instruments of the Council of Europe, while observing the conditions of human rights in Member States is done by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

The literature states that the implementation of international conventions in BiH is rare. The role of these documents is mostly indirect and it is supposed to influence domestic strategies and law-making.

The turnover in development of women rights came with Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women from 1967. 12 years later adjustments were made by adding first low-binding act to Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women that has normative power, which means that all of the party to the Declaration must enlist these principles into their legislation system. Article 1. of the Declaration provides us with broad and specific definition of discrimination "For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

From all the specific groups the Convention addresses the problem of endangerment of women in rural areas.

In synchronization with provisions of the Convention, a special Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was formed whose main agenda is monitoring progress in implementation of the Convention. Countries that signed this Declaration are obliged to send reports about their progress.

Along the basic text of the Convention Bosnia and Herzegovina ratified the Optional protocols as well, which enables them to start a proceeding before the UN committee in

singular or collective cases of discrimination against women or in case of breaking the rights guaranteed by the convention. After the start of proceedings, the Committee will question all of the available information from the side of the suing party and ask for relevant information from the state. Committee can also start classified investigation, visit states etc. After the end of the investigation, their findings, comments and recommendations will be forwarded to state involved. The state is obligated to response to these findings, comments and recommendations within 6 months and to report on the measures taken within the period of 1 year.

This is the part where we are going to briefly reflect on Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe, 2011) that recognizes the violence against women as breaking the basic human rights therefore obliging the party countries to conduct necessary legislative and other measures for improvement of women's rights with a special dedication to improvement of the measures regarding the rights of victims without discrimination on any grounds. Providing protection and protection in general should meet the specific situation of endangered parties. In the Convention text it is clearly stated that the Women can't be treated as homogenous group, and that their specific characteristics should be taken in consideration in order to provide adequate protection. The Council of Europe formed a work group of experts (GREVIO) with the task to monitor progress and implementation within the state party of the Convention and to analyze the state's reports that are being submitted every 4 years. Their task is to receive reports from civil society organizations as well. In case these organizations need help the Group will visit the government and ask for answers.

a. The conventions that protect specific groups

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) for the first time introduces the commitment to involve gender perspective in promotion of human rights for persons with disabilities. Article 6. offers the protection against discrimination for Women, and Women as member of discriminated group that faces more obstacles in all spheres of life. The Convention obliges states participants to form monitoring body for implementation of the Convention as well as to form mechanisms for promotion, protection and monitoring of implementation of the Conventions' provisions, therefore demanding inclusion of the civil sector in the process of monitoring.

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women are in charge of admittance of remonstrance both from individuals and organizations and the same procedure is followed in case that remonstrance is filed against one of the country members of convention.

For protection of racial and national minorities we list 2 conventions and those are: 1. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination adopted by the UN in 1967 which contains all of the usual protection mechanisms that we listed under the UN's conventions, 2. Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted by the Council of Europe in 1995. Both of these conventions did not enlist gender perspective and do not mention women and children as vulnerable group within their national minority. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, International Convention for the Protection of All Persons both include provisions that protects refugees and dislocated persons that are not able to take care of themselves due to personal reasons (partly affecting persons of old age).

We are now addressing our focus on the documents in practice whose goal is to protect LGBT population. These documents (Resolution on Human rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (UN R 17/19) and the new Resolution on Human rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (27/32)) are not binding enough. They are simply the first step in protection of this population that needs to serve as a starting point for countries in establishment of strategic and legislative frame on country level.

It is important to emphasize that the UN and the Council of Europe Committees, after their reports on implementation of legal acts, send their recommendations for improvement of conditions in concrete areas as well. These recommendations should serve as guidelines to countries in their implementation of human rights, but in practice they are more guidelines for non-government sector that enables them to apply pressure on certain institutions on various areas and levels of government.

The organizations, as we already mentioned, have a possibility to report on implementation of the conventions. Those reports can be a “shadow reports”, meaning, that reports are submitted to the committee after reports from the government or they can be “an alternative report reports”, meaning, that reports are submitted before the report of the government. This practice is in use because of the fear of the civil society about the government’ report objectivity and relevance to the real situation.

The greatest achievement of these reports lies in the fact that they are based on monitoring of the practices of implementation of certain document, coordination and solidarity among different actors. The committees are encouraging active participation of organizations and in their rules of procedures they have established the ways of participation of non-government sector’s reports in the process of analysis of the implementation of the convention in certain country. They call for better cooperation between organizations and for oral and written statements to be provided as well as the information and documents relevant to committee’s involvement on implementation of conventions.

b. Domestic legal framework

Both on international and government level marginalized groups are often a subject of many strategical documents whose main purpose is to define guidelines for institutions and other conductors. Their practical implementation is often questionable considering that they demand coordination with various institutions on different levels and financial resources whose sources are unclear.

In BiH strategies and action plans for improving the rights and position of marginalized groups, although they most often state the determination to implement measures and activities envisaged by these documents respecting the gender perspective, still in stating these measures are not concretized measures that respect the specifics of men and women. In these types of strategies civil society organizations have the most advocacy material for starting an initiative for empowerment of the groups they advocate for in front of the competent institutions.

Somewhat bigger influence in practical use has the Gender action plan (GAP) passed by the Gender Equality Agency. Current action plan was passed for period of 2018-2022. GAP contains measure that are going to be implemented to realize the following goals: making, implementation and monitoring of program of measures for improvement of gender equality in the institutions of power following the next; making, strengthening, of system, mechanisms and instruments for accomplishment of gender equality; as well

as accomplishing and strengthening cooperation and partnerships. GAP contains the analysis and assessment of current conditions as well as measures for improvement of all areas of life. GAP indicates the condition of women in areas of work and employment, education and access to education, culture and sports, health and social protection and security. GAP on many occasions indicates the cooperation with non-government sector in areas they assess as crucial: violence in family, security, health, education, gender-sensitive budgeting etc. GAP indicates the importance in conducting projects funded of FIGAP² funds. GAP BiH is a starting step in conducting local action plans.

i. The most important legal regulations

GAP BiH was created on the basis of the Gender Equality Law (GEL) (revised text, Official Gazette of BiH no. 32/10) and that Law forbids the discrimination defined as putting persons into less favorable position based on gender or sexual orientation in both public and private areas of life. In addition, the Law obliges the ruling authorities to take proper measures in elimination and prohibition of violence based upon gender or sexual orientation in both public and private areas of life and to insure instruments for help, assistance and compensation to victims. Of a great importance for marginalized groups are the regulations of this Law that prescribes bringing and implementing of special temporary measures with a purpose of promotion and protection of gender equality and those shall not be considered as discrimination, or so-called "positive discrimination". The Law as well as CEDAW convention, among marginalized groups, mention only women from rural areas in terms of their economical rights.

The Law demands from authorities of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality (Agency for Gender Equality and from Entity centers for gender equality) to lead statistics and monitoring of the law enforcement, receiving and handling of citizens' complaint as well as judicial protection in these matters to be provided without discrimination. These public service organs are obliged to bring special measures for protection and form institutional mechanisms (such as gender equality commission) that will enforce the Law and recommendations of GAP. The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination (Official Gazette of BiH no. 59/09 and 66/16) although introduced later is broader and offers more clear definition of discrimination and forms of discrimination against people that requires protection, and states numerous conditions upon which discrimination can be considered as discrimination. The Law recognizes that any discrimination against certain individual based on multiple grounds, discrimination occurring multiple times (repeated discrimination) and discrimination occurring over an extended period of time (extended discrimination) shall be considered to represent aggravated form of discrimination.

For our targeted group the provision of the Law that requires public authorities and institutions to cooperate with NGO sector is of a great importance. That is especially visible while conducting reports and during the preparation of law, strategies and other plans that are being conducted on the subject of human rights and questions of discrimination. The Law states that the central institution for protection of human rights is Institution of Ombudsmen that is available to citizens for objections through following legal measures: a lawsuit to establish discrimination, lawsuit for prohibition and elimination of discrimination, lawsuit for reimbursement of damage and public announcement of the verdict upon which

2 Strategija za unapređenje prava i položaja osoba sa invaliditetom u Federaciji Bosne i Hercegovine (2016-2021.), available at: [http://www.fbihvlada.gov.ba/file/Strategija%20za%20unapre%C4%91enje%20prava%20i%20polo%C5%BEaja%20osoba%20s%20invaliditetom%20u%20Federaciji%20Bosne%20i%20Hercegovine%20\(2016.-2021.\)%20.pdf](http://www.fbihvlada.gov.ba/file/Strategija%20za%20unapre%C4%91enje%20prava%20i%20polo%C5%BEaja%20osoba%20s%20invaliditetom%20u%20Federaciji%20Bosne%20i%20Hercegovine%20(2016.-2021.)%20.pdf) i Strategija unapređenja društvenog položaja lica sa invaliditetom u Republici Srpskoj 2017-2026, available at: <https://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/MZSZ/dokumenti/Documents/Strategija%20unapre%C4%91enja%20dru%C5%A1tvenog%20polo%C5%BEaja%20lica%20sa%20invaliditetom.pdf>

the violation of rights for equal costs in the proceedings was determined. Except already mentioned lawsuits the Law introduces a collective lawsuit for protection from discrimination - legal means for protection of rights available to associations and organizations involved in protection of human rights or rights of specific group. On the grounds of these two laws anti discriminatory provisions were passed in this and other regulations such as labor laws and laws governing social and health protection and insurance. In these laws a special focus is on protection of motherhood and it prescribes provisions on financial reimbursement during parental leave. In the laws on pension and disability insurance the advantage is given to female gender and that serve as a base for somewhat more favorable position of women in accomplishing old-age and disability family pensions. All of these provisions establish mechanisms for protection of rights of first and second level trough judicial proceedings, inspection bodies as well as protection of Ombudsman.

The analysis of local policies

In order for the consciousness on the importance of conducting gender perspective in all areas of life to become alive in local community GAP BiH made recommendation for adopting local action plans and defined the role of local commissions for gender equality as one of the institutional mechanisms. In addition to that they determined their priority areas (prevention and suppression of violence based on gender, including the family violence and human trafficking, public life and decision making, employment and access to economical resources, education, culture and sport, prevention and protection, care, gender and security) that we covered by analyzing strategic documents on local level apropos to the significance of these documents for women in marginalized groups considering the importance of regulating of these questions on local level. Therefore, we are providing review on strategic documents that are crucial in terms of community development and improvement of status of women in marginalized groups from our 10 targeted local communities.

4.1. Banja Luka - general data and local policies

According to the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013, in Banja Luka there are 180.053 residents - 93.543 of women and 86.510 of men, that is 145,32 residents per square kilometer or 2,76 residents per household. The data form Tax Administration states that at the end of 2019 73.490 residents were employed from which 59,26 % in economic activities, and 40,74% in non-economic organizations, institutions and other establishments. The activities in which the most of population is involved in is trade (17,42%), public administration, defense and mandatory social security (12,29 %), processing industry (10,44), health and social work (9,13%), and in area of traffic-communication and warehousing (8,17%). The city budget for 2021 is 149.770.000 KM.³

In strategic documents of city of Banja Luka the question of gender equality isn't represented. In City's Development Strategy⁴, as vulnerable groups are recognized persons with disability, young persons and persons of old age, but their position in the society is not discussed from a gender perspective. The same situation applies to Action plan for improvement of conditions of persons with disability for period 2020-2026⁵ which follows Entity strategy and covers numerous questions in regards to this population, but it does not deal with questions of women nor violence and gender equality. This Action plan is closely linked to cooperation with NGO's sector that recognized both mentioned documents as important in providing of social services and protection of people in need. The cooperation and support of city authorities is commendable.

Lastly, Local action employment plan in Banja Luka area for 2017⁶ (the only available

³ Data from official web page of the City of Banja Luka: <https://www.banjaluka.rs.ba/>

⁴ Strategija razvoja Grada Banja Luka u periodu 2018 – 2027. godine, available at: <https://www.banjaluka.rs.ba/gradska-uprava/strategija-razvoja-града/>

⁵ Akcioni plan za unapređenje položaja lica sa invaliditetom u gradu Banjoj Luci za period 2020 – 2026. godine, available at: <https://www.banjaluka.rs.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/8-AP-OSI-2020-2026.pdf>

⁶ Akcioni plan za pošljavanje na području Grada Banja Luke za 2017. godinu, available at: <https://www.banjaluka.rs.ba/wp-content/>

document on official web page) does not offer statistics in this area divided on genders, nor it covers questions of women entrepreneurship.

As City's Assembly formed a Committee for cooperation with religious communities and NGOs, national minorities, other citizens associations and associations for gender equality, while the local action plan for gender equality wasn't adopted (it is not available on official city's website).

a. Responses from local institutions

In Banja Luka, we received an answer only from the Center for Social Work. Other institutions did not respond to the questionnaire.

Center for Social Work stated that they have developed cooperation with other institutions responsible for the social and health care system and that they cooperate with NGO institutions on regular basis, that is, regular cooperation with organization which run Safe House in Banja Luka.

Center for Social Work Banja Luka highlighted that new Protocol on proceedings in protection in city of Banja Luka is in making and that its more in tune with revised Law on Protection from Violence in Family. However, it has been shown that "it's not so much up to new or old Protocols and formal proceedings as much as it is up to the problem of not following procedures from the side of all subjects of protection." This kind of answer prioritize the question of responsibility and availability of complains for beneficiaries in cases where they were wronged due to the case of unprofessional conduct as well as the possibility of support in case of misconduct from the side of subjects in charge.

Center for Social Work Banja Luka has good cooperation with police and NGO "Udružene žene", but they find necessary to define the actions of health institutions (such as Psychiatric Clinic in cases when perpetrator of violence is addicted on alcohol or mentally disturbed person) and to develop the cooperation with State Prosecution and Court to encourage faster and more efficient sentencing of urgent protective measures.

4.2. Bijeljina - general data and local policies

According to the latest official population census from 2013 city of Bijeljina has 107.715 residents, somewhat above 146 residents per square kilometer, out of which 50,95% are women. It can be assessed that the majority of the population is consisted of citizens ranging from 16-54 years of age, and that in comparison to census from 1991 the number of population above 65 is on the rise and number of children and youth is in decline. In that sense in comparison to census from 1991 there has been increase of population of working age ranging from 15-64 for about 25% that presents a challenge for employment. If we observe that divided by professions highest involvement in numbers and active businesses are in trading (41,70%), businesses from the sector of processing industry (15,72%). The next sector is science and technology (8,05%), construction (7,78%), followed by traffic-communications and warehousing (6,33%) and other activities with smaller percentage.⁷ The budget of city of Bijeljina is 51.527.729,00 KM.

uploads/2017/08/akcioni_plan_zaposljavanja_2017.pdf

⁷ Strategija lokalnog razvoja Grada Bijeljine 2014-2023., available at: <https://www.gradbijeljina.org/UcitaneSlike/admin/Dokumenti/strategija-lokalnog-razvoja-grada-bijeljina-2014-2023,-revidovana-za-period-2019-2023.pdf>

The Local Development Strategy of City of Bijeljina from 2014-2023 was revised for period 2019-2023. This document does not contain any information that are separated on basis of gender except those regarding the unemployment and educational structure of unemployed persons, and educational and gender structure of persons employed within city's administrative services.

This Strategy especially focuses on improvement of position of persons with disability with a focus on accessibility to public services. Vision of city's development includes a principle of equal possibilities for all. In their future goals the division on gender is prioritized.

In the Strategy, it is also stated that City will endorse youth associations and associations of persons with disability but there are no words on support of safe houses in the segment of supporting of NGO.

Action employment plan of City of Bijeljina 2019-2023⁸ is defined as one of the operational goals for conducting activity measures for employment of categories that are most unlikely to get employed such as: young persons, children of soldiers who lost their life in war, war veterans with disability and other persons with disability, demobilized soldiers, members of ethnic minority, Roma population, women and persons over the age of 50.

City of Bijeljina adopted the Local action plan document for inclusion of Roma minority in the area of the city of Bijeljina for 2016-2018⁹ that was conducted in cooperation with Citizen's association for promotion of education of Roma population "Otaharin" Bijeljina as a result of signed memorandum between city of Bijeljina and this Association in the framework of the Active Participation for Inclusion of Roma Population Project funded by the EU through their help instruments (IPA) - Support to Civil Society. Significance of this document is that in its making, both representatives from local institutions and non-government organizations participated together.

With this Action plan the position of Roma minority has been clearly described and it can be defined as social exclusion meaning "poor living conditions with no adequate living facilities, possibility for maintaining personal hygiene, and good health conditions, low or no education level (especially women) and unemployment. Not accepting and lack of knowledge of Roma customs from the side of the rest of local community is mostly a cause of mutual intolerance, but also a cause of discrimination and segregation of Roma population."¹⁰ This document goals and measures works on improvement of the conditions of Roma population exactly in these described areas.

The document emphasizes the bad social status of Roma women, and plans the activities on improvement of the conditions in areas of women's entrepreneurship and self-employment and it also points out the fact that it is necessary to increase the number of women engagements as a working power which is very low within the Roma women population. Except that there is a need for education of Roma women on the subject of sexual and reproductive health and a need to act preventively on the appearance of health issues. Numerous planned activities are focused on improvement of status of Roma families in all areas of life.

A part of the Action plan is dedicated to gender equality and it clearly states the attention to

8 Available at: https://www.gradbijeljina.org/UcitaneSlike/admin/Dokumenti/akcioni_plan_zaposljavanja_grada-bijeljina-2019-2023.pdf

9 Available at: http://kalisara-ric.ba/dokumenti/KS_AP/LAP%20Grad%20Bijeljina,2016-2018.pdf

10 The introductory part of the Local action plan document for inclusion of Roma minority in the area of the city of Bijeljina for 2016-2018

improve the productivity of institutional mechanisms for gender equality within authorities on local levels as well as the obedience in regards to the Law on Gender Equality. “Considering that Roma women have a needs for improvement of their personal status it is imperative to stimulate Roma women, through campaigns to participate more actively in political and social flows as well as to increase their activities within their communities.”¹¹ In this part the represented questions are social protection, or in this case protection from violence, questions of housing and protection of property rights of Roma women.

Strategy of National Minorities in City of Bijeljina was made last year and in that strategic plan they incorporated the Action plan - Agenda needs of women in Bijeljina with a focus on minority and marginalized groups that was done within the Project Women’s rights - Agenda for positive changes financed from the side of the EU, implemented by CURE Foundation and Foundation for Women’s Empowerment.

In Bijeljina, there is Commission for Gender Equality active within City Council¹², while the local action plan for gender equality wasn’t made - respectively not available. Already mentioned Local action plan for inclusion of Roma population in the city of Bijeljina wasn’t renewed - there are no documents available that would suggest otherwise.

a. Responses from local institutions

From Bijeljina we received answers from the City Services and the Bijeljina Health Center.

Bijeljina has formed Commission for Gender Equality and they meet once per month or more often if needed. The reports from taskforce for fight against violence and the group for coordination and cooperation in questions of prevention of violence are regularly provided to the Mayer. In planning of city budget, the question of gender equality is not on the agenda. City supports associations through grants, but there is no direct support of women’s associations. The cooperation with women’s associations is conducted through implementation of city’s acts (Action plan for fight against violence in family), and also through financing services of social care provided by various associations. All the projects out of the area of employment are funded of the city budget through Agency for small and medium enterprises but there are no special grants for women enterprises.

The analysis in regards to area of gender equality is in progress at his moment in Bijeljina and it is conducted through cooperation with Center for Social Work, Employment bureau and City government. Also, the signing of new protocol on actions in cases of violence in family is in preparation.

In Bijeljina among 31 councilors in Municipal Assembly only 3 are women, there are no women head of departments, they are mostly employed on less influential positions.

In Health Center Bijeljina there is within the institution special service of counseling that includes counseling on the subject of violence in family, sexual abuse and other forms of molestation. The afore mentioned service in Bijeljina is conducted from the side of Center for Protection of Mental Health, based on the needs, respectively from the side of psychologists and psychiatrists. These services are available through individual and group work.

Out of all received answers only Health Center Bijeljina states that they had organized

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² We mostly learn about their activities from the media, and one of them is the selection for the City of Bijeljina Women Distinction Award.

basic health prevention checkups that involves mammography, cholesterol, diabetes and blood pressure measurements, gynecological exams and PAPA test swops. Health center from Bijeljina has regular cooperation with NGO sector. In cooperation with Women's Association "Romkinje" and "Otharin" they managed to organize preventive medical exams in sector's ambulatory cares and in central building as well as the exams conducted within informal Roma settlements.

Health Center from Bijeljina shows a progressive picture of cooperation with NGO sector and sensibility for work on improvement of health within marginalized groups by achieving cooperation, field activities, their proactivity and by planning the activities mainly focused on accessibility to regular medical exams and raising of the awareness on positive health habits and the importance of preventive doctoral exams. According to the "Health institution network plan" Health center Bijeljina organized work on 26 different locations, therefore covering and providing rural areas with medical protection.

All of the three Health Centers state that they provided accessibility to their institutions to people in wheelchair and just in Health Center Bijeljina health workers were educated in sign language.

4.3. Bratunac - general data and local policies

On the territory of the Bratunac Municipality according to census from 2013 there are 20.340 residents or 69,4 residents per square kilometer, out of which 10.091 men and 10.249 women, 50,10 % women to 49,9 of men. According to the data available from Tax administration concluded by 12.31.20116 within Bratunac Municipality there was 2056 persons employed, trading businesses (316) employs 520 employees or 25,3%, legal entities employ 1.536 employees or 74,7%. Out of all employed in economy, agriculture and entrepreneurship and service businesses 1566 persons are employed within economy (76%) and outside of the economy 490 (24%)¹³. The budget in Bratunac Municipality for 2021 is 13.224.000.

Bratunac Municipality in their Development Strategy for period of 2017-2022¹⁴ uses statistics data divided on the base of gender from where we can notice that women are unemployed in bigger percentage than man and that they are more frequent users of health and social protection. Opposite to that, there are no division on gender when the question of statistics of development is in order. It is impossible to determine the status and number of women in entrepreneurial activities or the ownership of other business activities. The Strategy recognizes the importance of NGO sector and active participation of citizens in "all processes critical for the future of the municipal" without special direction. From the data used in previous researches it is visible that Bratunac municipality has a formed Gender Equality Commission within the Municipal Assembly that meets several times a year to analyze the analysis of the condition of gender equality and planned measures for future period. The Commission is also in charge of reviewing of citizens' complaints and in conducting activities in promotion of gender equality during certain important dates. In 2019 the document of analysis of gender equality was conducted and it is available upon the request but during the time, this research was conducted we did not manage to get this analysis from the representatives of Bratunac municipality therefore, it is unclear on which area does this analysis apply to.

¹³ Data from Strategija održivog razvoja Opštine Bratunac za period 2017 - 2022 god.

¹⁴ Available at: https://opstinabraturac.com/images/strategija_razvoja.pdf

In Bratunac there is still a very important question of women victims of war so some project with attention on improvement of condition of women victims of war were endorsed. In cooperation with NGO sector, they also signed Protocol on mutual cooperation of institutions and NGO's in providing support to victims of war torture as special category of war victims.

In this part we are going to mention the Strategy for Youth from 2010-2012¹⁵ that wasn't renewed because it provides important assessment on exclusion of youth returnee's population and the activity of youths where its clearly visible that the girls are more often involved in non-government sector and that they are more interested in informal education and culture activities, but with greater exposure to health risks.

Although the analysis and reports conducted from the side of numerous NGOs contains the information on the fact that Bratunac had local action plan for gender equality for period 2012-2014 this document is untraceable on the web as well as the information on its conducting and renewal. Similar situation is with Commission for Gender Equality that exists as an assembly body. Action plan - Agenda needs of women was sent as a proposal for consideration in Assembly of Bratunac Municipality, that was done within the project - Women's rights - Agenda for positive changes - financed from the side of the EU and implemented by CURE Foundation and Foundation for Women's Empowerment.

a. Responses from local institutions

We received the only answer from the Bratunac Health Center, other institutions did not respond for cooperation.

Health Center Bratunac states that within their institution there is a possibility, in case of violence on women, to make joined medical and forensic procedure or exam and gathering of forensic evidences to be done on one place at the same time by same person. This practice allows greater protection of unnecessary exposure of victims to additional traumas and to the secondary victimization. There is no special counseling service for victims of domestic violence and violence against women. The building is accessible to wheelchair users, but none of the employees have received sign language training.

¹⁵ Strategija za mlade Opštine Bratunac sa akcionim planom 2010 - 2012. godine, available at: <http://opstinabratunac.com/files/Strategija%20za%20mlade%202010.pdf>

4.4. Istočno Sarajevo - general data and local policies

City Istočno Sarajevo consists of 6 municipalities: Istočna Ilidža, Istočno Novo Sarajevo, Pale, Sokolac, Istočni Stari Grad and Trnovo. According to the data of census from 2013 in the city live 59.916 residents. The city's population is unevenly spread within this area. In Istočna Ilidža, Istočno Novo Sarajevo and Pale (around 39 % of the city's territory) in 2012 lived around 75% of total city's population and almost 2/3 of population live in urban city's areas, therefore the urbanization rate is way above average in RS. According to data from Tax Administration from 2015 in Istočno Sarajevo 17.634 persons were employed, most of them in the areas of processing industry (11,63%), trade (9,4%) and in area of construction (7,24%).¹⁶ The budget of Istočno Sarajevo for 2021 is 10.160.000 KM.

Development Strategy of Istočno Sarajevo 2016-2020 does not mention the questions of gender equality and marginalized groups even though that is the way of development of the city to the point where citizens are satisfied. Regarding the inclusion of NGO sector, the strategy points out the need for their activities and support that they are accomplishing to be integrated in social development of the city.

Due to the lack of other strategic documents,¹⁷ we consulted the City Statute¹⁸ since it was adopted in 2017. The City Statute more than any other statute of our targeted municipalities, states the commitment for accomplishment of respect of human rights and freedoms granted in international and domestic acts without discrimination and with gender equality for all citizens as well as the incentive of work of citizens' association that are of a great importance for city.

In Istočno Sarajevo, the Commission for Gender Equality has been formed as a body of the City Assembly, while Istočno Sarajevo does not have an available local action plan for gender equality.

a. Responses from local institutions

From the institutions from Istočno Sarajevo, the Center for Social Work Istočna Ilidža and the Health Center Istočno Sarajevo responded to questionnaires.

The Center for Social Work states that they have established cooperation with other local institutions responsible for social and health care, and they also developed regular cooperation with the non-governmental sector. As an example, they emphasize that they achieve cooperation with SOS Children's Villages BiH through youth employment and independence projects. However, CSW Istočna Ilidža highlights that the existing communication and exchange of information with other institutions responsible in the chain of protection of socially vulnerable groups should be improved.

Center for Social Work Istočna Ilidža points out the problem of poverty and bad economic situation of women and the fact that they are often exposed to blackmails and manipulations, due to specific traditional role of women in family life. In addition to this there are no developed long-term solutions for accommodation and handling the victims of violence. They mention particularly mothers with children with disabilities and chronically ill women as most underprivileged.

In Health Center Istočna Ilidža there is within the institution special service of counseling that includes counseling on the subject of violence in family, sexual abuse and other

¹⁶ Data from: Strategija razvoja Istočnog Sarajeva 2016 – 2020.

¹⁷ Some analyzes mention the Istočno Sarajevo Youth Strategy, but the document itself is not available on the official website.

¹⁸ Statut Grada Istočno Sarajevo, available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/8y1c7mmtazc8q4g/STATUT%20-novi.doc?dl=0>

forms of molestation. In Health Center Istočno Sarajevo this service is conducted by social worker of psychologist and is available through individual and group work.

Health Center Istočno Sarajevo states their problem in conducting house visits due to the shortage of medical vehicles and supplies in medical institution that especially reflects poorly on persons with disability, women from remote rural areas and women of old age.

4.5. Konjic - general data and local policies

Konjic Municipality is located in the south-west of BiH and it has 26.381 residents (according to census from 2013) out of which 50.7% of women and 49.3% of men. Somewhat bigger percentage of population is living in urban city area (53% to 47% that lives in rural areas). Largest economy sectors from the perspective of employment comes out of sector of metal processing industry and service businesses. At the end of 2018, in Konjic there were 3.842 unemployed persons out of which 2.074 were women.¹⁹ The budget of Konjic Municipality for 2021 is 17.826.467 KM.

Integral Development Strategy of Konjic²⁰ Municipality is mostly involved in the area of employment and the handling of statistics that is divided on the base of gender. Among the most active association is the Women's Association "Žena za ženu". The Strategy recognizes the difficulty in financing and building of the capacities of the organizations and the importance of partnerships with municipal authorities that lies in following activities: strategic planning, conducting of traditional cultural manifestations, join projects in area of security, status of vulnerable groups and minorities in community etc.

The Strategy often equalizes the members of vulnerable groups with beneficiaries of social protection and women are not recognizes as a separate vulnerable group within marginalized groups. The condition of Roma population is specially recognized with the focus on vulnerability of Roma children. Persons with disability are characterized by social exclusion, and the Strategy recognizes the fact that they are facing all sorts of discrimination from the side of employer, institutions and other individuals but also among themselves considering that the rights they exercise do not apply equally to all and they depend on cause and level of disability. In the recommendation provided by the Strategy, Strategy recognizes need for improvement of infrastructural accessibility for persons with disability, strengthening of their organizations and improvement of conditions for retraining and hiring.

Among available strategic documents there is Local action employment plan for period of 2016-2018²¹, while there is no available information about whether the Municipal brought any strategic documents or action plans on the subject of gender equality. The City of Konjic formed the Commission for Gender Equality as a body within the Municipal Council.

a. Responses from institutions

We did not receive any answer from the institutions from the area of the municipality of Konjic.

¹⁹ Data from Integralna strategija razvoja Općine Konjic 2018-2027.

²⁰ Available at: <file:///C:/Users/WIN7/Downloads/Strategija-razvoja-Opcine-Konjic-2018-2027.pdf>

²¹ Available at: <file:///C:/Users/WIN7/Downloads/LAPZ-Opcina-Konjic.pdf>

4.6. Lukavac - general data and local policies

According to census from 2013, 44.520 residents live in Lukavac out of which 22.734 of women to 21.786 of men. According to the registrar of business subjects most businesses are those from the area of trade, mining, construction, catering and service businesses. Although Lukavac Municipality for several years now has entering path to evolution of entrepreneurship and its leading in this matter out of all Municipalities within Tuzla Canton. The crucial data in assessment of further growth and development of Lukavac Municipality is sustainability of work places. According to preliminary analysis, over 30% of employed persons are with legal entities that are in business deficits for the period of the last 5 years.²² The budget for Lukavac Municipality for 2021 is 27.255.000 KM.

The Strategy of Integrated Development of Lukavac Municipality 2019-2027²³ defines vision and goals of development in terms of economic sustainability and preservation of ecology and it also applies on improvement of conditions of social life of the citizens with equality of all groups (women, sensitive and vulnerable groups) and it emphasize the involvement of civil sector with respect to gender equality.

The Strategy is only partly providing statistics based on gender equality and the interesting data from these statistics is that among all registered businesses, the hair salons are most frequently registered and they are mostly run by women. Strategy states the existence of less favorable position of women in terms of employment and especially emphasize fewer employment of women with higher level of education, therefore one of the main goals is implementation of program for employment of women.

The calls for endorsement of NGOs announced from the side of Municipality authorities are in regards to areas of culture, sports, ecological awareness and preservation of environment, agricultural and rural development, and social protection that includes promotion of human rights in marginalized groups and gender equality.

Among some long-term project that are going to be supported by this Strategy there is a project of the Association "Srce i duša" called "Gender equality and empowerment of women's role in local community" that most obviously states their determination to introduce gender equality principles into development processes. Their two-year planes for implementation of the Strategy²⁴ are used to concretize projects that will be conducted until 2023. Except already mentioned plans there are also plans that involves old age population, Roma population and projects of construction of facilities for social housing. There is attention, in recent municipal documents, to increase funds for projects of improvement of status of women up to 40 % until the year of 2023.

A Commission for Gender Equality has been established in the Municipality of Lukavac, and local plans in the field of gender equality are not available.

a. Responses from local institutions

The municipal service was the only one to respond to the questionnaire sent to the institutions. In Lukavac municipality the Gender Commission was formed and they meet several times a year, depending on material that is on municipality schedule or regardless of Council meetings if needed. Officials within the Lukavac Municipality went through training

²² Data from: Strategija integriranog razvoja Općine Lukavac 2019.-2027.

²³ Available at: <https://opcina.lukavac.ba/podaci/2019/01/Strategija-integriranog-razvoja-Op%C4%87ine-Lukavac-2019-2027.pdf>

²⁴ Plan implementacije Strategije razvoja Općine Lukavac 2020 - 2022. and Plan implementacije Strategije razvoja Općine Lukavac 2019 - 2021. – Izmjene i dopune 23.04.2019., Available at: <https://opcina.lukavac.ba/strategija-integriranog-razvoja-opcine-lukavac/>

on subject of gender responsible budgeting and they used their acquired knowledge in planning of funds for civil society organizations. Lukavac Municipality supports the work of women's associations and they state that projects from the Association "Srce i duša" are being endorsed every year. They say that Municipality is also open for cooperation with NGO sector which they backing up with the fact that the project of women association was incorporated in the making of Strategy for Integrated Development of Municipality. The mentioned project of women's association regards to more active participation of women in decision making within local authorities. They also state that women's associations did not show greater interest in cooperation with local authorities.

Lukavac Municipality in cooperation with USAID implemented the project of employment of women from marginalized groups (PPMG) that resulted in opening 3 new trades owned by women. From their response we conclude that there is a program for support in economic empowerment of women.

On the last elections only 3 women (out of the 31 municipal councilors) got selected to serve in Municipal Council which is less than half than in previous mandate. One of the women is a deputy of the Chairman of the Municipal Council and 5 women are chief's deputies (out of ten deputies).

4.7. Mostar - general data and local policies

In the city of Mostar according to census from 2013 there are 105.797 residents and it is the biggest urban center in Herzegovina. The surroundings of the urban zone are highly populated. Before the last war Mostar was one of the strongest and striving economy center in former Yugoslavia. War devastation destroyed economy in Mostar, especially in the east side of the city. Tourism is one of the most developed economy branches in Mostar, especially after the admittance of Old City to UNESCO cultural heritage protection list. Budget of city of Mostar for 2021 is 91.161.151 KM.

City of Mostar lacks the strategic documents that approaches social development with a plan. Mostly, the available documents are those in regards to economic branches (energetics, tourism, cultural heritage) assessed as priority, while we were not able to find any strategic document that regards to improvement of status of groups that we targeted for this analysis.

The fact that the only local action plan for gender equality is the one for period 2013-2015²⁵ made on initiative of the NGO sector and the fact that it was not renewed proves the point that the question of gender equality in Mostar is on margins. Local action plan was made, shortly after the signing of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men, on local level from the side of city of Mostar. This way city of Mostar showed its determination on honoring and implementing the principles of gender equality into local politics. This attempt does not show any practical results of the activities of the Commission for Gender Equality that exists within City Council since 2007. Although LAP was founded on the analysis of the situation with clear recommendations, the assessment of their success was not reviewed.

²⁵ Lokalni akcioni plan za ravnopravnost spolova Grada Mostara 2013 - 2015., available at: https://www.gcfbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LAP_Mostar.pdf

a. Responses from local institutions

The questionnaire was answered by the city services and the Center for Social Work in the city of Mostar.

Mostar is trailing behind in comparison to other municipalities and cities in our analysis. Commission for Gender Equality wasn't formed, the city budget isn't gender sensitive and there are no sufficient funds set aside out of the budget for grants for women's associations. Cooperation with NGO sector is perceived as a mere consultation. The participation of women in governing body is according to available information very low, only 1/7 of 35 councilors are women.

The Center for Social Work of the City of Mostar states that they have established cooperation with responsible institutions, and they also have regular cooperation with the non-governmental sector. CSW Mostar, in addition to cooperation projects and accommodation in Safe Houses, also cooperates with the SOS Family Center through the exchange of information and planning joint action to provide adequate services.

CSW Mostar notes that there is a lack of regular communication and exchange of information with other institutions responsible in the chain of protection of socially vulnerable groups, which is not regulated by any formal document or procedure.

Center for Social Work from Mostar finds the way the system for protection of violence works as a main obstacle for them and women from marginalized groups. They are pointing out the inadequacies of service for protection and inadequate processing of perpetrator of violence. According to their experience, the group with most obstacles is Roma minority due to the low education rate and their exclusion from broader social community and due to their hard living conditions.

4.8. Tuzla - general data and local policies

On the territory of Tuzla according to census from 2017, 110.379 residents live. Official data on unemployment shows decrease of unemployment in 2017 (36,8%) of persons able to work for about 5% in comparison to 2012. In the percentage of all unemployed, 54% are women. The percent of young male persons (15-34) unemployed in the official unemployment register is 39,48% (3.118 out of 7.897) and we have similar situation with female where percentage of unemployed young women (15-34) in the unemployment register is 42,10% (4.163 out of 9.888). In comparison to 2012 there have been decrease of participation of young persons in the register of unemployment for 8,16% (9.923 out of 20.210 = 49,09% in 2012 to 7.281 out of 17.785 = 40,93%). Among the unemployed there is still an issue of long-term unemployment where 31% of women are unemployed for more than 9 years and 26% is waiting employment for 1 – 3 years. The budget of city of Tuzla for 2021 is 65.270.424,56 KM.

The city of Tuzla, just like Mostar adopted their Local action plan for gender equality²⁶ through FIGAP in 2013 and its validity ran out in 2016 and it was not renewed, or renewed document is not available on the official web page. Their plan also refers to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men on local level that shows that these documents were adopted in several cities in BiH at the same time and that they were a product of joined initiatives.

²⁶ Akcioni plan ravnopravnosti spolova Općine Tuzla, available at: https://www.gcfbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/LAP_Tuzla.pdf

The Local action plan is in tune with GAP BiH. It shows low level of employment of women in local authorities (in average only 20 %) and lower level of employment of women in general (40%). Although Tuzla adopted the Development Strategy of the Municipality of Tuzla until 2026²⁷ that defines innovative vision and goals for development of the city and it refers on European documents such as Europe 2020 Development Strategy and the Aalborg Charter that provides vision of development of sustainable local community, still there is a question of gender equality as one of the development questions that is not addressed properly. Although one of the indicators for monitoring of implementation of the Strategy and monitoring of the number of migration and activity of population it wasn't stated that their activities will be taking gender into consideration. This strategy represents development concept based on smart, sustainable and inclusive development which includes commitment for inclusion of innovations, social inclusion and support of European values. Tuzla also adopted strategic documents for improvement of conditions of marginalized groups.

The Strategy for People of Old Age 2020-2026²⁸ addresses the following: social inclusion and dignified aging, access to community support, empowered social and health protection, moving through city and transportation and protection and security of persons of old age. Strategy states the principles that are in tuned with principles of "decade of healthy aging" 2020-2030 upon which all of the actions in regards to persons of old age should base on human rights, equality, nondiscrimination, gender equality and inter-generational solidarity. Strategy uses gender aware language. The document points out the poor economic and social conditions of women of old age and it expresses commitment for improvement of equality between men and women in access and use of the legal mechanisms.

Tuzla adopted the Action plan for Roma population 2018-2021²⁹ that is in tune with the basic strategy of the country that deals with areas of housing, social and health protection, and education. From this document and from the Law on National Minorities (Official Gazette of TK no. 4/09) it is visible that the representatives of national minorities (including Council for National Minorities on the cantonal level) is given a chance to participate in creating of priorities for improvement of condition of this population, reporting on human rights, and reporting on recommendations of members of national minority. Action plan recognize the need to improve the level of health protection and education, especially with women that are recognized as most vulnerable. The need for monitoring and prevention of extramarital union of under aged persons is very important.

As we already mentioned Tuzla had Action plan for gender equality on their disposal but it become outdated 5 years ago, and local institutional mechanism in this area is Commission for Gender Equality, a Municipal Assembly body. Action plan - Agenda needs of women with a special focus on marginalized groups in Tuzla, is a document that was done within the project Women's rights - Agenda for positive changes financed from the side of the EU and implemented by CURE Foundation and Foundation for Women's Empowerment. The document is sent to the Municipal Council advocating to be accepted.

a. Responses from local institutions

Answers were received from the city services and the Center for Social Work of the city of Tuzla.

27 Available at: <http://grad.tuzla.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Strategija-razvoja-grad-a-Tuzla-do-2026.pdf>

28 Available at: <http://grad.tuzla.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Strategija-za-osobe-trece-zivotne-dobi-Tuzla-2020-2026.pdf>

29 Available at: <http://grad.tuzla.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/LAP-ZA-ROME-Grad-Tuzla2018-2021.pdf>

In the city of Tuzla operates the Commission for Gender Equality. The question of gender equality is analyzed within regular reports from Service for culture, sport and social protection. Out of the official documents they have signed the Protocol on cooperation and action in cases of violence against women and women in families that foresees the co-financing of the Safe House that is functioning within the Women Association "Vive" Tuzla. They are accomplishing their cooperation with Women's associations through financing and co-financing of projects and they are also co-financing projects of economic empowerment of women.

It is important to mention that there is a plan to make the analysis of gender equality on local level and that they have already passed decision to make Action plan on gender equality for period of 2022-2024. Although we were not given the number of women in Tuzla City Council, we can still grade the level of the participation of women in local authorities as satisfying if we consider that 12 out of 15 Mayor assistants are women.

The Center for Social Work Tuzla states that they have established cooperation with responsible institutions, and they also have regular cooperation with the non-governmental sector.

In the responses of centers for social work the problem of financing is pointed out, for example the representatives of the Center for Social Work Tuzla states: "It is important to develop and empower capacities of Center for Social Work in the sense that we can be able to provide adequate shelter for victims of violence so they can be relocated from their violent environment and that we can provide them priority in employment etc."

The Center for Social Work Tuzla mentions their good networking with organisations for protection of human rights. They accomplish their cooperation through projects whose main agenda is prevention of pathological social appearances, organized joint education, work with persons through various counseling, joint efforts on field focused on protection of women rights, children, Roma minority etc.

According to the experiences of CSW Tuzla, unemployed women without formal education and women from rural areas are especially marginalized due to mentioned reasons. Roma women are especially vulnerable because they are exposed to double discrimination, both gender and ethnical which along with social discrimination puts additional weight on their individual and family obstacles. "Most of the Roma women are not formally employed and they are surviving by collecting of secondary raw materials, unreported work or of selling goods on the streets. Uneducated and economically dependent many of Roma women don't see possibilities of existence outside of the Roma community therefore they rarely decide to report violence in family. It is evidenced that due to very bad social and economic situation young girls from Roma population start sexual intercourses at very young age and form extramarital unions regardless of fact that it is forbidden by law. The most common answer to question why do they do it is that they can't handle their situation and that they are looking for a way out." For persons with disability the main obstacle is nonexistence of adequate services/institutions, specially equipped for admittance of victims of violence who are women with disabilities. They are noticing that women of old age because of "economic manipulation and shame what the environment will say" rarely decide to report violence in family.

4.9. Visoko - general data and local policies

According to census from 2013, Visoko Municipality has 41.352 residents. Average population density is 179 residents per square kilometer. Census determined that 29% of residents lives in urban city area, while 71% lives outside of this area. Textile and leather industry and car industry employ close to 40 % of population. Food processing industry has long tradition in the area of Visoko Municipality with well qualified working power and this industry now hires 800 workers³⁰. The budget of city of Visoko for 2021 is 19.885.000,00 KM.

Although we can't talk about document of development strategy of Visoko Municipality 2015-2021³¹ as a document that fulfils all of the gender-based principles, it is noticed that female gender is somewhat represented in statistics and in the use of certain terms. The Strategy uses term *head of municipalities* in female gender (in BHS), and statistics of unemployment is divided on base of gender as well. Strategy states that the biggest discrepancy in employment of men and women is present with persons with higher education where ratio of employment favors the men. When we talk about employment programs, the Strategy did not recognize the need for special attention on women, or statistics of person employed through program of employment to be divided by gender, although it is clearly visible from available documents (support of companies including the one from area of textile industry) that they need female working power.

Strategy recognizes only young people as activists of great importance to community, and states that the Municipality supports associations in areas of culture, sport, youth activism etc.

In the area of health protection, the Strategy recognizes need for special attention on Roma population especially, women and children what is also emphasized by Local Action plan on integration of Roma population in Visoko conducted for period 2018-2021.³² It is important to mention that representatives of Roma population along with the representatives of all important institutions in Visoko were involved in making of this document and that the document uses gender-sensitive language. Action deals with the same subjects as general strategy of BiH: education, housing, health and social protection. Action plan recognizes that the targeted group for empowerment and employment are women, and that the reasons for not hiring members of Roma population are based on prejudice and marginalization of Roma population. Action plan also recognizes need for better health protection of women, especially young mothers and a need for protection from violence in family and education of women on protection mechanisms.

Visoko has active Commission for Human Rights and Gender Equality as a Municipal Council body but action plan for gender equality isn't adopted nor available.

a. Responses from local institutions

We only received a response from the Center for Social Work Visoko.

The Center for Social Work states that they have established cooperation with local institutions, and they also have regular cooperation with the non-governmental sector.

30 Data from: Strategija razvoja Općine Visoko 2015-2021. godine.

31 Available at: <http://www.visoko.gov.ba/download/strategija-razvoja-opcine-visoko-2015-2021/?wpdmdl=360&refresh=6085815d7f0ec1619362141>

32 Lokalni akcioni plan za unapređenje položaja Romske populacije u oblastima obrazovanja, zapošljavanja, zdravstvene i socijalne zaštite i stambenog zbrinjavanja u Općini Visoko, available at: http://kalisara-ric.ba/dokumenti/KS_AP/LAP%20Opcina%20Visoko.2018-2021.pdf

Center for Social Work Visoko states their good cooperation and networking with Roma associations and associations of persons with disabilities, their cooperation with providers of free legal aid services for women in Zenica and their joint efforts with projects of SOS villages in the activities of empowerment of children rights.

The response of Center for Social Work Visoko is somewhat worrying, because of the fact that they consider that centers for social work in the link of a common chain of action shouldn't be included in assessment and identification of existence of violence, since that is in police jurisdiction. "Center forwards violence complaint to police station Visoko, as investigative organ that assesses and identifies the existence of violence or form of violence and submits request to court for sentencing measures to be taken. Considering this Center is not in charge to identify and assess the violence. In case the Court issues the request for Center to monitor and report, Center does so with the cooperation with other institutions involved in proceeding." Here we need to additionally investigate the problem of their disclaimer attitude that potentially are created by and further creates unclear and unfunctional bureaucratic procedures and form sluggishness in the work of the institutions and difficulties with identification of responsible subjects in proceedings.

Center for Social Work from Visoko finds that the main problems of Roma minority is the lack of available information regarding to their rights and procedures, the fear of reaction regarding their applications, and a lack of trust because they don't feel protected enough from the government's side. For the women of old age, the biggest problem is "shame" that leads to violence not being reported, for young women the obstacle is ignorance in regards to procedures and protection mechanisms.

4.10. Zavidovići - general data and local policies

As a consequences of the last war there are unnatural demographic consequences and homogenization of national groups in certain municipalities with significant decrease in population in comparison to number of residents in 1991. By monitoring decreasing trend of newborns it is logical to conclude that the age structure of the population is seriously damaged. According to census from 2013 Zavidovići Municipality had 35.988 residents or 69 residents per square kilometer. The number of employed persons according to statistics on 31 Decembre 2015 was 3.768 and number of unemployed 7.343. By comparing this data it is clear that the municipality has very high level of unemployment. There are 1.068 business entities and most dominant are smaller catering facilities and small stores and they hire 3.769 employees.³³ The budget of Zavidovići Municipality for 2021 is 12.361.399,00 KM.

The Strategy of Integrated Development of Zavidovići Municipality for period of 2017-2026³⁴ made the accent on local mechanisms in order for their community to become a community of equals with balanced development of rural and urban areas. One of the strategic goals is: Social and security protection of endangered categories of population and support of projects of social inclusion and strengthening of health sector. Above mentioned includes social integration through participation on labor market, enabling the access to all goods, services, resources and rights that will empower more active participation of socially excluded on the labor market.

³³ Data from: Strategija integriranog razvoja Općine Zavidovići za period 2017-2026.

³⁴ Available at: <http://www.zavidovici.ba/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/STRATEGIJA-INTEGRIRANOG-RAZVOJA-OP%C4%86INE-ZAVIDOVI%C4%86I-ZA-PERIOD-2017-2026.-GODINE.pdf>

In the Action plan for conducting this Strategy,³⁵ especially in this year, it is stated that there is enhanced need for access to education for young women and their participation on labor market, it is also mentioning regular financial contributions to Safe Houses that are functioning within the Citizens Association “Medica” from Zenica.

In the Strategy of Youth Politics for period 2018-2023³⁶ social categories of youths, and members of Roma population, especially in the area of education, are recognized as the one that requires special protection. Statistical data in this document are mostly divided on the base of gender but measures alone do not monitor specificity of their condition and statistic data.

Zavidovići Municipality has Action plan for improvement of position of Roma population in the areas of education, social and health protection, employment, housing and culture for period 2019-2023.³⁷ The Action plan uses gender sensitive language but the goals and measures for improvement of Roma population do not cover the specificity conditions of women. Action plan points on the existence of mediators of Roma nationality in educational system (preschool and elementary school level). The conditions for employment of women is recognized through their involvement in courses on jewellery making and sawing.

Out of all analyzed municipalities Zavidovići Municipality adopted the document of Gender responsible budget analysis and Gender responsible budgeting for period of 2017-2018³⁸ and that confirms that there is no inclusion of gender perspective in public politics without planning the financial means for conducting the activity. This document introduces definition of gender responsible budgeting as “planning, programing and budgeting conducted by government in order to contribute to improvement of gender equality and accomplishment of women’s rights” that requires base, and reflects on the need for interventions that will solve the question of gender inadequacy in politics, plans and budgets on all levels of government and administration. This document was made with attention to improve politics on the level of local community in context of gender equality in the area of employment and social protection. This document provides us with criterions among which is the implementation of gender equality in all strategic goals that comes with municipal development strategy. Active documents for current period are not found.

As stated in the Action plan “Agenda of needs of women with special focus on minority and marginalized groups in the Zavidovići Municipality”,³⁹ due to non existence of local action plans, programs for improvement of status of women are not yet introduced. Mentioned document is sent to Council for approval and the administration of Zavidovići Municipality shows interest for cooperation in regards to the question of gender equality. Zavidovići also has Commission for social activities, human rights, youth, and gender equality as an municipal body.

35 Akcioni plan implementacije Strategije integriranog razvoja Općine Zavidovići za period 2017-2026 godina za 2021. godinu, available at: <http://www.zavidovici.ba/strategije-i-dokumenti/>

36 Available at: <http://www.zavidovici.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/slu%C5%BEbeni-glasnik-48-117.pdf>

37 Available at: <http://www.zavidovici.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/akcioni-plan.pdf>

38 Available at: <http://www.zavidovici.ba/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Rodno-odgovorana-bud%C5%BEetska-analiza-i-Akcioni-plan.docx>

39 The advocacy document created within the project “Women’s Rights - Agenda for Positive Change” in BiH, funded by the European Union under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and implemented by the CURE Foundation and the Foundation for Women’s Empowerment (FWE).

a. Responses from local institutions

We received a response only from the Municipality of Zavidovići.

A special Commission for social activities was formed within Municipal Council Zavidovići and it deals with human rights, youths and gender equality. They meet once per month. The gender equality wasn't taken into consideration in planning of budget.

Activity and work of women associations are supported through projects (four associations got not more than 3000 km in 2020) and the same story is with women entrepreneurs (10 of them got around 4000 km). The cooperation with institutions is evidenced by signing the Memorandum of cooperation with two associations "Majska ruža" and "Krivaja Iskra", and by signing of Protocol on cooperation with informal network consisted of five organizations from Zavidovići area. With the protocol on cooperation and treaties that are being synced every year according to assessed budget, Zavidovići Municipality sets aside funds for co-financing of Safe House that functions under association "Medica" from Zenica.

The role and participation of women in politics is assessed as inadequate and worse in comparison to the past 8 years. Only 2 out of 29 councilors are women.

Stories of women's initiatives and associations

The analysis of conversations with the representatives of women's non-governmental organizations that are active on local level offers a systematic layout of stories of women that express the need for associations and activism, their reasons for past, present and future activities, as well as their stories about their experience working inside of the organization. The twofold analysis of the stories – one side focused on lived experiences and personal stories and the other side detailing descriptions of the situation and possibilities for action of a particular organization inside the local community – offers us the possibility to see a wider picture of all of the work, problems and aspirations that activists have to face in smaller communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The analysis is presented as a case study that provides us with deeper and more detailed descriptions of the stories offered by our interlocutors, but limited to only ten local communities where we chose one women's non-governmental organization per community. The case study presents deeper and detailed insights for the selected case but without aspirations to make the case representative. Detailed descriptions will highlight the points and places in need of additional research.

Ten women's NGOs were selected with very different goals, aspirations and scope of action, from local associations established to promote women's handiwork and handicrafts to organizations whose main goals are the direct fight for women's human rights. Interviews were conducted with representatives of organizations speaking on behalf of rural women, Roma women, long-term unemployed women, women with disabilities as their own experience, but also about experiences and knowledge about marginalized groups of women gained indirectly through work and activities within the organization. Selected organizations are: Association of Citizens Psychological Center Sense from Banja Luka, the Association of Women "Maja Kravica" from Bratunac, the Association of Citizens "Probudi se" Istočno Sarajevo, the Association of Women "Romkinja" from Bijeljina, the Association of Women "Pašinke" together with "Sigurno Mjesto" from Zavidovići, "Nera" Konjic, "Women's Vision" from Tuzla, "Active Women Donje Moštre" from Visoko, "Vrbe" Mostar, and Women's Association "Srce i duša" Prokosovići, Lukavac.

Numerous studies highlight the problem of implementing laws and regulations on the local levels where the majority of every day contact happens, and that presented itself as the most crucial factor that determines quality of life. Cure Foundation focuses its attention on numerous studies, such as: "Pozicija, uključenost i prava žena koje pripadaju manjinskim i marginalizovanim grupama u Bosni i Hercegovini" ("The position, inclusion and rights of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina"), "Aktivizmi sa margina: procjena kapaciteta deset odabranih ženskih organizacija" ("Activism on the margin: Capacity assessment of 10 chosen women's organizations"), "Žene koje inspirisu..." ("Inspiring women"), a research project examining conditions and possibilities of women in small local communities, and "Moj glas odjekuje" ("My voice echoes"), which pertain to gender equality in municipalities and cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These researches show that legal mechanisms regarding gender equality, discrimination, and the empowerment of women in society exist only on paper on the higher level of government and by the time it reaches the local levels where their basic intentions

should be visible and enacted, they get stuck in the implementation phase, unable to be put to practical use. It is crucial to point out the problem with the implementation to be able to comprehend the frame in which these mentioned organizations strive to achieve their missions. It is also important to bear in mind the state of consciousness of Bosnian society and the insensitivity toward the status of women and marginalized groups in small, local communities. What remains a mainly patriarchal society with clearly visible patriarchal norms and values is unfortunately still hardly an atmosphere for pointing out gender equality issues and discussing marginalized groups.

5.1. Women's Association "Nera" (Konjic) - Motives, vision, mission and target groups

The story of Women's Association "Nera" from Konjic highlights the point that every association and joint efforts of women sets the positive atmosphere for their empowerment and raises the awareness of women's rights and their active participation and status in society. Applying a strict definition and a polarization of feminist and non-feminist women's associations is considered wrong because it neglects the complexity and multidimensional point of view portrayed in these analyses.

"Nera" is a women's association with the primary goals of economically empowering of women through the promotion of their handiwork and handicrafts. It started as a desire, arising from a recognition of necessity, to offer women excluded from main social flows to become relevant and more valued in the labor market, therefore making them an active participant of society. The reasons for social exclusion might be due to their age, health issues, their attachments to their households due to the need of constant care for some of the household members, or simply from a lack of competency applicable to the local work market. This Association recognized the issue of disregard for women's contributions, through their unpaid work, commitment, and their overall influence in everyday quality of life in local communities.

Finance, strategies and plans

The association is being funded through various smaller projects with limited budgets, so the financial shortages are being compensated through the involvement and volunteering work of women within the Association.

A problem they've detected in funding through projects is the dispersal of funds allotted to various topics, disallowing them to focus and put their attention on the matter they labelled as a priority.

This often results in necessity to apply for projects they neither have capacity nor education for, but they have to apply, simply because of money. This is the case with many associations, who are faced with dispersing their potential and their focus from their main strategical agenda mainly because of financial sustainability.

Accomplishing the visibility and cooperation with media

The Association is visible and they have good relationships with media. "Konjic is a small town and simply existing equals us being visible," they say. They are doing their best in updating their Facebook page and maintaining their visibility and accessibility on social media.

They use the public areas and streets in order to raise the awareness in the local community about the topics they deal with, often organizing gatherings to discuss and express their concerns.

Cooperation with institutions

The Association doesn't have their own facilities nor have they ever received any sort of help from town officials. However, they have begun to recognize changes and willingness for cooperation in newly selected town officials.

Although their goal is to be autonomous and politically independent, they greet the acknowledgement and interest of municipal authorities. "This is a big step for us and we still don't have our own facilities. The mayor recognized us as a valuable and hard-working ally in the local community."

An acknowledged problem more commonly seen in smaller rather than large communities is a difficulty of gaining support as means of finance, as well as facilities and basic work requirements, if the association wants to stay independent and is not linked to the leading dominant political parties.

The Association representative pointed out the long-lasting cooperation and support of Centre for Social Work of Konjic Municipality and their involvement in NGOs' projects as a perfect example of good practice.

Capacity and competencies

For the activity and engagement of the organization, it is imperative to ensure a permanent focus on strategic goals as well as additional education within the organization to be able to be more desirable to future donators. Furthermore, they find that educating members on subjects such as writing projects, online reports, and further education on financial and legislative management of the organization is the key. An issue of hierarchy and favoritism occur when smaller organizations are associating with a larger, more established organization, which leads to a certain fear of being stripped of deserved recognition; therefore, the need for mentorship and partnership must be balanced, in order to insure a rightful relationship and trust.

Marginalized groups and local communities

Association "Nera" (initially without support of the local community) managed to be heard solely due to their persistence in highlighting the issues in their environment. They managed to include the problem of marginalized groups on the municipal agenda, enabling them to become an active participant in shaping distribution and application of local budgets. They consider the ways marginalized groups are perceived in smaller, local communities to be a main problem. These groups are mentioned only as a social problem, limiting the possibilities of solving long-term problems and addressing the issue of empowerment of these groups.

Konjic Municipality managed to secure daily food service for socially disadvantaged groups, which is admirable, but on the other side we think that the problem cannot be solved by simply providing a warm meal per day, disregarding the reasons and only dealing with consequences. We address the need to provide possibilities for people to work as well as a need to change certain Municipal decisions and regulations in order to provide people with greater support.

Currently they are conducting the “Sivo je šareno” (“Grey is Colorful”) project whose main aim is to empower mothers with adult children who have high levels of disabilities. “Yesterday we had a workshop and the first tears were shed, because these are long forgotten women. After their first activity, painting collage paper, they immediately asked, ‘When are we going to do it again?’ They recognized the chance to learn new skills – the kind of skills they can use at home to produce certain products to sell.”

Younger women are more focused on entrepreneurship projects with attention to secure their economic independence, therefore they plan to join the association if they see the potential possibility to further educate themselves and gain more competence.

The basic living conditions of women in local community

City transport for population from rural areas is depicted as a great obstacle, especially for women who want to present their handicrafts and products at city markets. Childcare, such as kindergartens, are often not available in these areas, creating a further complication.

During the time of lockdown and restriction of movement due to the pandemic, the transport of chronically ill patients was cancelled. One participant reflected upon this added hardship: “It is diminishing; 150 kilometers is not a small distance. I wish that there could be some possibilities to do a study or to write a memo to local Municipal authorities to provide us with a car and a driver. We would consider that a remarkable improvement.”

We consider that the Gender Commission within the Municipality was not really active and barely made any conclusions in the few meetings they had over their four-year mandate. The perceived lack of involvement was expressed by one research participant, who noted that “We, as a Women’s organization, were never invited to either give a suggestion nor to be familiarized with their activities.” We are noticing a trend in electing the Women for Gender Commission in the old Municipal Convocation, as well as in the new, that we need to address: women, elected to these positions, are neither members of NGO’s, nor have they ever previously shown any interest on the matter of equality and improvement of the status of women. We find the number of women within the Municipal Council to be inadequate, as well as the number of women from marginalized groups. For example, as one participant shared, “we have never had a member of Roma population within the Municipal Council.”

Violence on women exists but it’s often invisible, especially during the pandemic when households have been more isolated, and other matters have been garnering more attention, such as high numbers of infected citizens, burials, etc. Because of these reasons the number of reported incidents of violence has been less than before pandemic.

Work and activities in the time of pandemic

During the pandemic, the organizations have shifted their focus to providing social help. They received numerous requests from women mostly asking for food. One representative shared their organization’s experience during this time: “We worked day and night. All of our capacities turned to providing help to citizens. We find it

interesting, and borderline sad, the fact that the NGOs were not included in Crisis Headquarters. During that time the restrictions of movement for people under the age of 18 was in force and instead of NGO's they included scouts for help. We acted independently of the institutions and provided our help to those in need.”

One of the interviewed representatives of the organizations told us a story about how their small organization managed to gain trust from the community through their commitment and how they were able to encourage critical thinking and mobilize their fellow citizens for actions:

“During the lockdown I ended up in isolation with pneumonia on both sides and I saw how full of flaws our health system is. I was admitted to the ward after 6 -7 hours of doctoral examinations all conducted outside. Hungry and exhausted, I finally got into that improvised hospital. The room had no heating and I had chills. I was given two blankets but I still had to sleep in my jacket. They told me that the dinner is over and that I will get a cup of tea in the morning. That triggered me to talk to some of my colleagues from the organization and we managed to organize a humanitarian story straight out of that isolation ward. By organizing and conducting this activity our aim was not to shed a bad light on the system; we simply wanted to involve the community in this crisis. We managed to organize the citizens to bring us and the health workers a warm dinner every night. We ensured 800 dinners were served during that period. Women were remarkable, they would bring heaters, blankets and cough syrups, and soon enough money donations came pouring in.” This activity and attention helped people to start feeling better.

5.2. Aktiv žena Donje Moštre, Visoko - Motives, vision, mission and target groups

The organization is founded on the initiative of “Badem”, a youth association registered back in 2015. The Association had a significant pause in their activities which reflected on their networking and their cooperation with institutions, thereby limiting the reach of influence of the organization. Their mission is to involve women in decision-making in their local community in order to ensure their presence, visibility, and psychological and economic stability through their growth, with the special focus on greenhouse production which is the main activity of women in their local community. They recognize an issue of unemployed women being overloaded and economically and socially underappreciated, therefore they put their focus on empowering them through association and cooperation.

Finance, strategies and plans

They cover the rent charged by their local community off the membership fees. In addition, they sporadically receive several donations and smaller projects, which cover the basic costs, and the situation is very uncertain. As the women members participate in fairs through the Association, they set aside a percentage of their income for joint work and activities.

The main plan is to increase the number of memberships and the capacity of the Association. As they recognized that in order to increase the membership, it is necessary to offer an elaborate idea that will animate and economically empower women, they believe that it is important “in the future to go towards that goal so that

some women can be employed or start their own business through associations. And this catering that we do, it should be made publicly available, so that people know, and some firms might start to hire us. We have women who can cook, but they don't know anything else."

Accomplishing the visibility and cooperation with media

Considering their present needs, the organizations have had good cooperation with media. They are increasing their visibility through their presentations at fairs and participation in touristic offers by promoting women's handicrafts.

Cooperation with institutions

The women's organizations are not recognized in local community to the extent that they deserve. The local communities do not organize activities that include them. They were only contacted once, at the beginning of pandemic, for sewing the masks. One organization's representative reflected upon their level of engagement: "Municipal authorities call us for help, when they need to conduct certain activities in cooperation with international institutions. In these kinds of collective efforts, our capacity is barely utilized, using us as mere observers. They do not allow us the possibility of greater engagement." The problem is a lack of active listening and acknowledging the needs of women's associations. The assemblies with the municipal institutions so far can be considered sporadic and without real commitment or real involvement of authorities. They emphasize that the institutions show a lack of initiative, knowledge and capacity of municipal engagement: "In our initiative some of the things went through, not in full, but we cannot really blame them entirely, as there is a question of our slight ignorance as well. Maybe there is a better chance to cooperate, maybe, but we just haven't asked, and the time is passing."

Capacities and competencies

Due to discontinuation of their activities and the problems that they are encountering every day, the Association is experiencing a sense of disorientation, incompetence and a sense of powerlessness.

According to the experiences of the Association members, in order to enhance and to encourage independent thinking any type of education is beneficial. Psychological workshops are considered as a project of great importance for these women, and they've shown large interest in them. Psychological health is commonly neglected, especially among women, from whom we expect a great amount of emotional work and commitment.

Marginalized groups and local community

It was noticed that the problems of marginalized groups in the time of the pandemic have increased. We find it admirable that the Daily Centre for people with disabilities was founded and that shows major improvements. However, mothers of children with disabilities have often had to provide care all by themselves: "We can't get to speech therapists, not to mention anything else." Women living in rural areas are socially excluded but also not used to questioning their position, which makes the improvement of their status much harder.

Unemployed young women are interested in financial security and job offers.

They participate in education and activities oriented toward personal growth and development. Older women find it more important to socialize with other women, to share their stories and experiences, and this is exactly what the association offers them.

Basic living conditions of women in local community

There are parts in Visoko Municipality without running water. They provide themselves with water by bringing it from nearby wells. Water and the sewage system are the main concerns since the majority of the local population is involved in cattle breeding that additionally complicates the situation. The participation of women in politics regresses and the number of women in higher functions is lower. The question of status and advancement of women's positions in the platforms of mostly dominant political parties is classified under the cooperation with NGOs, and it's not elaborated as a separate issue. There are no practices in starting a citizen's movement, which would have the capacity to lead to greater changes.

Economic empowerment of women and marginalized groups is sporadic and project based, only linked to cooperation and incentives of international organizations; therefore, it remains unreachable and incomprehensible to average woman. "Some of the projects are endorsed and they are linked to some bigger organizations, so in order to get an incentive, you have to meet several conditions and you have to co-finance, and that makes it much harder for average women to succeed." In addition, there are calls from employment offices that are not explicitly intended for women.

Violence on women

According to the experiences of our interlocutors, violence is usually not reported, neither from the victims nor the locals. A problem that adds to the complexity of the issue is limited perceptions on the subject of violence, considering only physical violence as violence, disregarding and not recognizing other forms of violence.

Work and activities in the time of pandemic

The pandemic slowed down all planned activities and limited our reach of influence. Online lectures added an additional burden to the women representatives of our association.

5.3. Women's Association "Vrbe", Mostar - Motives, vision, mission and target groups

Women's associations "Vrbe" from Gnojnice and Kočine (suburbs of Mostar) started their activities in 2019 when they noticed that the nearby elementary school is being abandoned and it's left to deteriorate. Spontaneously, they came to an idea to found Women's Associations and ask for permission to use the facilities. After they got permission, a whole second floor of the building was given to them. They started to furnish the rooms and decided to invite more women. They sent out the notice that the Women's association is being formed in order to attract more women. At the beginning their focus was on familiarization with the issues and problems of Women. The mission and the vision of the Association is to use their Activities, skills and the power of their ideas for improvement and benefit of local community as well as their own. The aim is to encourage further activities and to enable equal chances for women pursuing entrepreneurship, and to empower self-confidence and independence. The Association mostly gathers unemployed women who find it hard to get a job or to retrain, housewives that wishes to get out of the house in order to make changes through their involvement and activities but also to promote various products and handicrafts they make.

Finances, strategies and plans

They are funded of memberships fees. They did not make any strategical plans nor any sort of the documents of that kind.

Accomplishing the visibility and cooperation with media

They mainly accomplish their visibility through social networks and occasionally through local TV stations as well as through fairs where they present their handicrafts.

Cooperation with institutions

The city of Mostar has the problem of jurisdiction when addressing the institutions and pointing out the issues in community. The Association did not achieve contacts or cooperation with any of the institutions. Before the elections in Mostar representatives of certain political parties reached to them and tried to apply pressure.

"We are Non-political organization but the pressure is made on us but only from the side of dominant political parties, not from the new ones. We allowed all of them to state their case and that is when I realized how much it costs to be someone pawn order to be able to achieve something. The mentioned reasons make it extremely difficult to be non-governmental and non-political organization. I wanted us to work and to become visible and relevant through our activities."

Capacities and competencies

The recognized problem within the organization is a lack of knowledge in conducting administrative and legislative businesses. Considering that the Association mostly consists of unemployed women and housewives from suburban areas there is a limited number of members competent enough to deal with administration and they are overloaded with responsibilities.

"Important is the will and the fact that we know what we want. Some are afraid of

the responsibility and would want everything to be handled by someone else. We need to deal with consequences and the weight of the projects together as one.” The members of Association find the possibility of placement and selling of their handicrafts in order to elevate their economic status as a key. The education in areas of internet marketing is considered to be of great importance for the women trying to promote and sell their products. It is important to establish the balance between personal growth and growth of the association’s interests, capacities and competencies as a whole. Psychological workshops proved to be of a great importance.

Marginalized groups and local community

Unemployed women and housewives are often isolated which leads to a fear of public appearance. In addition, complete commitment to someone else, emotional work, social exclusion and closedness leads to neglect of mental health. “We still have a patriarchal approach. I see that the biggest problem is closedness and fear of unknown. They see the association as a place to come to relax from all the problems and obligations they have at home but it’s still a struggle to encourage them to speak out about their problems.”

Younger women are interested in education and gaining competence in practical knowledge which would lead to economic empowerment in the areas of: culinary, canning, production of natural juices, medical herbs and placement of these products on market.

Basic living conditions of women in local community

Mostar has a big issue with the displacement of garbage especially from suburban areas. The public transportation is irregular and inadequate as well as the connection between other suburban areas which in most parts affects women since they rarely own cars and driving licenses.

Children parks and organized activities for children are mostly inaccessible to people in suburban areas. There is a big issue of neglecting of mental health and a lack of possibilities to work on help and prevention. ”There are so many psychologists on bureau of employment, why wouldn’t we start an initiative to assign one to every ambulatory care so we are able to go and have a conversation if we need to have one? Since we are already paying for medical insurance why would we had to sign up to Centre for mental health which is overloaded. To have simple conversation there, without being admitted is close to impossible.”

Violence on women

Violence exists, but it’s not recognized or addressed on time from neither victims nor the members of local community. Actions are taken only when it’s too late and when the situation escalates. The Safe House is in a bad shape and it’s not endorsed enough from Municipality authorities. Adequate measures such as social and economic empowerment are not being offered and the existing measures are short-termed and sporadic.

Work and activities in the time of pandemic

The members of the Association were sawing masks and collecting donations for fellow citizens that lost all of their income.

5.4. Association “Sigurno mjesto” Zavidovići - Motives, vision, mission and target groups

Association “Sigurno mjesto” from Zavidovići was founded back in 2011 with main goal to help women the victims of gender-based violence. Their primary goal is to work on endorsements, tutoring and prevention of violence with these women. They often organize workshops with elementary and high school kids as well as with the women from rural areas and women from marginalized groups. They recognized the importance of economic empowerment of women in order for them to become more independent and to become able to get out of the situation where they are forced to tolerate violence. In that purpose the Association organizes all sorts of creative workshops and they enable them to sell their products.

Finances, strategies and plans

So far, the Association has been funded by Italian donators from the region of Lombardy. Starting this year, due to the big crisis caused by pandemic the donations were cut off. That problem is now being sorted through the support of other NGO's who supplied them with facilities and office equipment. Networking, cooperation and partnership within the NGO's sector enabled them to continue their work and overcome the financing crisis which explains the meaning of importance of mutual cooperation and joined engagement.

Accomplishing the visibility and cooperation with media

The success of accomplished social and cultural capital of the Association as well as individuals is of a great importance. The Association accomplishes good cooperation with local medias as well as the medias on national level due to the fact that one of their members is a journalist. They try to use public areas to organize street's campaigns in order to emphasize the importance of prevention of violence on women.

Cooperation with institutions

The cooperation with institutions is on decent level with the emphasis on a lack of competence within the institutions for work on local community levels. Once a year the round table is organized where they inform each other of who did what, and about recorded cases in order to improve their skills and knowledges. "Institutions are doing their job to the best of their abilities considering the levels of their capacities." The association accomplishes regular cooperation with the Safe Houses.

The capacities and the competences of the organization

Currently their main problem is a source of the financing.

Marginalized groups and local community

A great number of members of Roma population lives in informal settlements in Zavidovići Municipality. They are mostly involved in collecting materials such as iron, aluminum and copper as well as selling second-hand goods on markets. Often, they don't meet all the necessary legal requirements for such activities but the municipal authorities have no understanding for them and their situation. Authorities are not trying to find a long-term solution; they simply issue them a

citation and forbid them to work. Not providing them with possibility to work leads to increase of the number of beggars. “Just two weeks ago police forbid them to work and fined them. And now we notice a great number of them out on the street, begging. They used to live of their work and where are they now? Out on the street begging for help, it’s sad. Obviously, there is no understanding for their situation. I can understand the fact that, that is considered as grey economy but still... When they work on the market, they should pay taxes, but I think that they make such a small amount of money out of selling these second-hand goods the they should be exempted from paying taxes that way they wouldn’t have to be bagging.”

Basic living conditions of women in local community

There is a major issue of running water in rural areas. Public transportation is irregular and inaccessible. The disposal of garbage is becoming a less of an issue in the past two years, however, there is still an issue of environmental pollution of living areas especially the rivers and uncontrolled forest logging. “City of Zavidovići has a nickname ‘a city of wood’ but it is horrible what human factor managed to do here. “

Political participation and economic empowerment

They are involved in budget planning through their involvement with international organizations as Women’s NGO. The problem remains stuck in further implementation and it’s turn to “dead letter“. Except action plans, strategies and created budget we should apply pressure on starting the stories and activities in order to put in practice all already established and agreed matters. The Association already started an initiative to set aside certain amounts of money out of budget for financing Women’s associations, but the associations are still unclear what to accomplish with this since the amounts are very limited. Out of five members of Commission for Gender Equality all five are men, which explains how serious they take the question of gender equality. The number of women in Municipal Council is also negligible. The informal Women’s entrepreneurship group is active within the community and they try to influence, among other things the greater involvement of women in political decisioning.

Violence on women

We noticed the increased interest for improvement of quality of work of Centre for Social Work as an institution in direct contact with the victims of violence. The problem is a lack of competences and limited possibilities both financial and legislative.

Work and activities in the time of pandemic

The activities are limited and the question of existence has arisen.

5.5. Association “Ženska vizija”, Tuzla - Motives, vision, mission and target groups

Associations “Ženska vizija” out of Tuzla is a relatively new association founded in 2019 with the vision of Bosnia becoming a society in which there will not be a place for prejudices based on gender, political orientation, nationality or sexual orientation. Targeted groups are women of all ages and backgrounds and strategies and plan main focus is fight for gender equality and women’s rights.

Finances, strategies and plans

The Association is founded through projects and memberships fees. The donations for improvement and building the capacities and competencies were not received so far. We only received donations which were focused on providing social help (mostly at the beginning of pandemic). They are working on building strategical plans daily. Considering the fact that the most income comes out of projects funds they, as relatively young associations face the problem of how to find donators and how to guarantee the quality and commitment in conducting their activities.

Accomplishing the visibility and cooperation with media

They are active on social networks and they have excellent cooperation with medias. Medias provides them with enough coverage to be able to address the problems, of specific status of women and their living standards, with the rest of population. They organize various activities where they use public areas as a resource for achieving the visibility and influence in their attempts, to connect with their fellow citizens and other relevant participants.

Cooperation with institutions

They familiarized their cooperation with institutions: Centre for Social Work, Network of Female Police Officers, Institute of Public Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health by signing the agreement. They are hoping to achieve successful cooperation with city of Tuzla. They are actively investing in improvement of relationships with councilors. “I actually tried to explain to them that NGO’S can be a valuable asset since we already got all of the materials ready, and they just need to present it to the council in order to start an initiative and to lobby etc. Of course, they accepted.”

Capacities and competencies

Financing and writing projects for actual donators is an exciting endeavor that requires constant adjustments and changes, therefore, requires additional education, mentorship and support. Seminars concerning manufacturing or possibility of external manufacturing of measurability of capacities of education as well as internet marketing and the running of social networks would be useful for further work.

Marginalized groups in local community

In cooperation with Foundation for Women’s Empowerment the Association started Centre for self-help where they organize different workshops and lectures, with attention to increase the possibility and quality of life as well as the visibility of women with mental health issues. Women with disabilities are denied of a lot of

things solely because of the numbers of architectural barriers in the city and in their surroundings. Women with disabilities are recognized as a discriminated group. Young women show most interest in resolving the issues of male and female status. "They are talking about their colleagues, not only in feminine gender. Their main problem is the fact that youth is not recognized as a pillar of any sort of changes in our society. The youths are willing and able but they only need to be presented with an opportunity and ambient in which they will live, work and be educated."

Basic living conditions of women in local community

The city of Tuzla is in a privileged position compared to other smaller rural areas, so the enabling of basic needs is on an acceptable level comparing to Bosnian standards. This Association got involved in solving a problem of gender inequality and they are currently working on it, because the city of Tuzla doesn't have a budget that equally supports all genders. We find the number of women in leading functions within the Municipal Council to be adequate. However, we find it contradictory that the city doesn't have gender-based equality within the budget, so the question arises how much are the women on functions actually involved in decision making and how much they are sensitized in concern to question of equality. The Association commits to increase the numbers of economically empowering projects of women through adopted politic measures and concrete actions. There is a noticeable problem of inadequate information accessible to the public, leading of statistics from the side of the institutions makes the women from marginalized groups even more invisible and lowers their possibility of planning and creating systematic and adequate reactions, concrete measures and activities. "We had an exchange of thoughts with employment bureau when we asked for data on how many women were employed with high school degree and university degree. They told me that they are not sorting employees by these criteria and that they can only send me the list of all of the employees."

Violence on women

The question of violence on women and the small steps made in direction of protection of women from violence happens under the pressure of NGO sector. The NGO sector uses its activities to shift the focus of institutions in charge on these issues because the institutions are often passive and slow when the question of social protection comes to their daily agenda. Our Association along with Centre for Women's rights worked on modification of the law which would enable the possibility of introducing a new term "trustworthy person" into our Criminal Code. This practice is already in use in some of the western countries. The Institute of Person of Trust is recognized as very important link in the chain for adequate response and prevention of violence. This proposal was unanimously accepted in the Federal Parliament. "This was something we were really looking forward to and soon the series of educations are going to take place for number women to become titled as a "person of trust" to be able to help women victims of violence. This mean that she will be able to call me and I will be educated enough to help her with papers, documents or any other thing she needs or simply to be a support to her and not to let her wonder around from counter to counter lost and traumatized. I think that this way we will contribute to protection of women victims of violence."

Work and activities in the time of pandemic

During the time of pandemic, members of the Association shifted their focus on single mothers employed on informal jobs such as cleaning and care of others as largely women's job due to the poverty and discrimination on labor market. They are forced to work without permit which in certain occasions presented itself as a question of endangering basic existences. The Association provided help for 12 women in the amount of 500 KM and pay their utility bills, and offer to buy them medications for one-month in front in case they are using some or they have a baby etc.

5.6. Citizens association Psychological Center Sense, Banja Luka - Motives, vision, mission and target groups

The Association was founded by 5 young women that just finished their studies. "All of us got master degree in psychology and we were unemployed so we wanted to get ourselves busy and what better way to do so than by doing the things you know and love. These days we are employed on the other places as well and the Association comes to us as 'our own place' but unfortunately, we are not developing it according to our initial plans." The basic mission of the Association is development and improvement of mental health through psychiatric work and various organized activities and workshops. In recent period we were involved in projects mainly focused on women with disabilities and improvement of their rights as one of our founders and activists is a woman with disability.

Finances, strategies and plans

The Association doesn't have developed strategic plan although they do have internal ideas and plans according to which they base their future work and activities. They are funded of projects and membership fees.

Accomplishing the visibility and cooperation with media

They do not have significant cooperation with media. There was only one occasion when their final projects activity got some modest media coverage, but they find the response to be decent for association such as "Sense." This is where the media engagement comes to focus, since they only focus on contributions and, who is conducting activities and not quality and benefit of these activities for society.

Cooperation with institutions

Due to regular employment, the founders did not continue their work in the Association in full capacity, thus limiting the scope of their activities and cooperation. They cooperate with the Center for Social Work and the Society of Psychologists. A prominent example of good practice is that the Society of Psychologists launched an action that enabled the introduction of a free helpline during a state of emergency "which raises hopes that awareness of mental health care will increase."

Capacities and competences

Things we find useful for future work and engagement of association are: education on making strategic plans, conducting and running administrative, legal and legislative businesses, internet marketing, social networking etc.

Marginalized groups and local community

In the context of discussing marginalized groups of women, stories and experiences from psychotherapy sessions with women with disabilities have to be mentioned. Quite different conditions have been recognized in the field, starting from the types of disabilities and the related opportunities and living conditions, depending on the support system, to the fact that condition of some women is such, that they do not have time to spare to do Psychiatric session nor they have a separate room where they would be able to conduct the session and talk, therefore they are forced to give up. "I think there are numerous problems especially when the women with the disabilities are in question. Maybe it's the financial momentum, there are major differences in social incomes between Federation and Republic of Srpska. In RS the system of personal assistance is regulated as an extended right and not as a law obligation. Some of the bigger centers such as Prijedor, Banja Luka have the assistance but some smaller areas don't. In case the center estimates that someone needs less hours of assistance when in case they need more, than they have to finance the assistance by themselves."

In order to attempt to make living conditions better and come with long-term systematic solutions we need to do it with plan considering all of the segments of life as a whole. Due to the lack of systematic solutions most of the burden falls on families, therefore the state of the individual depends on accidental circumstances. "In order for us to reach schools, universities and jobs we need adequate transportation. It is all connected but it's not systematically arranged. There are people who manage to deal with these circumstances with the help of their families or maybe due to the fact that the level of their disability allows them to. We also have people especially women with great capacities stuck in side of their house deteriorating because they have no solutions and because there is not enough of good will for this issue to be addressed."

Basic living conditions of women in local community

In addition to all of the common issues shared by all of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina such as poverty, lack of investments in social care system, protection of living environment, the right to work, the right on clean air, rivers, education and so on, many of the women with disabilities find the architectural barriers and inadequate urbanistic solutions to be limiting in their attempt to actively participate in society. In the city of Banja Luka there are busses and taxi services for people with disabilities funded from the side of city authorities which is the case of good practice worth to mention, however in capital city of Sarajevo this is still not regulated. The situation in Banja Luka as economical and administrative center of RS is actually good in comparison to other cities but there are still some obstacles and problems to work on. In smaller towns the situation is alarming. "We have a case in Prnjavor, where a woman with disability that lives on fourth floor didn't get out of the building for a half of year." Women, members of the Association, conducted a research on the topic on "Sexual and reproductive health of women with disabilities" which was realized within "Community of different but equal citizens" project whose main agenda is enhancement of social involvement and decrease of discrimination against people with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During this research the issue of the level of the education of health workers on the question of status of people with disabilities as well as the question of physical inaccessibility to health

institutions have been noticed. “It was terrible to have answers that are absurd.” According to the study only 40 percent of institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina are physically accessible to people with disabilities. New buildings are mostly accessible but there are issues with old building where in order to meet the regulations they put ramps that are steep and dangerous.⁴⁰

Violence on women

There are active associations in Banja Luka such as “United Women - Udružene žene” that offers a safe house for women victims of violence and they have noticeable results. “It has been talked about but whether that’s enough I can’t tell.” The members of the Sense are stressing out the fact of wrong and inadequate response of institutions dealing with the issue of family violence, where they relocate women and children instead of relocating a bully in this case a husband. ”I guess he is the one that needs to be worked on not woman, unfortunately this is the way our system functions.”

Work and activities in the time of pandemic

The activities did not change significantly except the transition of work to online mode.

5.7. Women’s Association “Romkinje”, Bijeljina - Motives, vision, mission and target groups

The Association exists since 2012 but it was not until 2018 that they intensified their activities and growth of their organization. Due to the specific conditions of life of women living in these informal settlements of Roma minority the organization operate directly within the Roma community. Their main goals are empowering, inclusion and providing a safe space for women within the informal Roma minority settlements in order to enable women to talk, educate and seek help if needed. ”It is imperative for us to be a part of community to be able to reach these women and take them out of their circle. Our goal is inclusion and we already see some improvements. The Association works in providing a safe place and on strengthening solidarity among them. We consider the absence of solidarity to be one of the main characteristics of patriarchal societies.”

Finances, strategies and plans

The activities of the Association are being funded through projects and they are actively participating on projects on both regional and on levels of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a partner. The Association is an example of good practices and closely linked to “Otharin” Association, a bigger well-known organization that provides them with mentorship and guidance and also with a possibility to access European funds.

Accomplishing visibility and cooperation with media

They communicate with medias on regular basis by informing them of their activities and by organizing press conferences. However, media interest is often linked to more interesting, better sounding projects due to their wish for “breaking news”

⁴⁰ This study is available at: <http://hcabl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pristup-%C5%BEena-sa-invaliditetom-u-BiH-seksualnom-i-reproduktivnom-zdravlju-i-planiranju-roditeljstva.pdf>

and that leads to the fact that importance of certain projects is being undermined which shows media insensitivity regarding the issues of gender-based violence. "They will come for occasions such as: 16 days of activism, 8th of March, listen to what Major has to say but only if you attract someone interesting to them, then, they will come. In general, they don't show enough understanding for problems of gender-based violence and the status of women. It seems as if they are private companies only interested in money. They often trivialize certain things just to make them a sensation so they have their breaking news. A murder of women becomes a sensation, how many times she was stabbed. It's all about sensation, but unfortunately, they have their audience. That is a part of society that is insensitive to others, especially on the problem of violence on women." They point out the public areas as an important resource for their activities as well as for the empowerment of women and raising the awareness of the community. "We use 16 days of Roma activism and one month of Roma women activism (from March 8 to April 8) as an opportunity to encourage the women through education to be creative, to get out on the streets, to provide them with an opportunity to make their voices heard, in order for them to fight for their rights, to teach them to say, no, I don't want, and I can't. When we teach them that, even if the smallest part remains, they will be able to seek their rights."

Cooperation with institutions

Like every other NGO that functions on a local level they have the necessity to remain in good relationship with the institutions which is affecting their possibility to criticize the work of the institutions, "it's a double-edged sword." Cooperation with institutions is of great importance especially for "Roma women" to be able to get familiarized with rights, therefore they try to organize info sessions and call professionals from various institutions to clarify things for them. They consider cooperation with health institutions in Bijeljina to be an example of good practices. This institution recognized the issue of accessibility to health institutions for women members of the Roma population because they usually don't practice preventions and regular doctor examinations. "Some of the doctor checkups can cost up to hundreds of KM and they can't afford it, therefore they become ill and they don't go to doctors. It took me a year to enlighten these women to go to a gynecologist but I did it. Health center offers free mammographic and gynecological examination of Roma women. Every year I would get appointments for 45 women to go to doctor examinations. Once I was even given a van with a portable mammographic device to do checkups on the spot within the Roma settlement and that meant a lot."

In the city of Bijeljina there is significant understanding for the Roma population as well as the existence of help providing and cooperation although with limited possibilities. "This is one of the few municipalities involved in housing of the Roma population and providing free meals. We are doing this for the past 15 years. Although we do have that sort of support, we also need to realize that Bosnia and Herzegovina is an extremely poor society."

An unfunctional system that causes losses, an imbalanced distribution where the most endangered ones and those with the greatest needs suffer, leads to the problem of not planning enough and not investing in a social care system. This type of system does not offer a possibility of creating a long-term solution. There is only a possibility

to deal with consequences and not the causes. Sluggishness and inadequacy of the institutions on all levels with their capacities, competencies and possibility of improvement of conditions of public sector and social care system leads to accumulation of problems. "The third problem we are facing with is that Roma women in the age when she would need to start her regular education are already mothers. NI Roma woman was supposed to go to regular school and it was about to start her high school education but she started marking the school and eventually she quit and none of the institutions did nothing about it. She got married at 15 and yet again institutions did nothing. She is 45 now and has 30 years of marriage, a bully for a husband and 6 children from which 3 of them underaged. Bosnian approach to these issues is simply cosmetic. When you only dealing with consequences and not the causes the problems pile up and that's the fact."

Capacities and competences

By accomplishing the possibility of cooperation within the EU projects under the mentorship of their partnership organization the Association is steadily moving in direction of improvement of their capacities in order to reaching the level needed to attract donators an access certain funds. Since the Association is based in the Roma settlement, they are managing better communication and insight on the situation which is crucial for realizing goals and conducting activities.

Marginalized groups and local community

Most of the women living in Roma settlements are fighting for survival and possibility to insure basic existence. That leaves them limited space for self-improvement and more active citizens' engagement and that causes closedness and depression. "It is truly heroic how Roma women manages to survive and feed their children without jobs. I have experienced that, when a child comes to you and say I am hungry and you don't have anything to give him. In this type of situation, you are forced to go out and beg or to go from door to door and ask for help. I feel that women should be awarded a medal for their effort in this kind of situations. We have managed to ensure free books and free lunch to be served in schools with the help of "Otaharin" organization and their involvement in lobbying in city administration. That's really not a lot especially for women dealing with family violence, children and poverty. We have cases of women that deals with all of that in addition to problem of housing not to mention the accessibility of water and electricity and they are handling it."

Young women are offered a chance for education and self-improvement through education, seminars and volunteering work. Young women and young girls see this as opportunity to get out of the house and collect new knowledge and skills and make money.

Living conditions of women in local community

The living conditions in these informal settlements are poor with limited access to water and electricity. Due to the low education rate, and inaccessibility to institutions they are deprived of various kind of help that supposed to be on their disposal. Finding permanent employment is also aggravated because of the level of their education, poverty and living standards. "There are no long-term solutions. That sort of things happens here. We have an activity plan in function and they are working on additional one, but I still consider all of this as dealing with 'cosmetics'. Systematic solutions of inclusion of Roma population are nonexistent. Only once a

year government issues a subvention for employers that hires one of the members of Roma minority. Subvention is on minimal wage and it's not enough. The employer has to pay taxes and all duties for that employee. The problem is that it's hard to find an employer willing to hire someone without any previous experience.”

“We need to open the possibility of employment. I find the education, finances and economic status to be most important issue in this community. If you give a possibility to Roma women such as myself, they will learn they just need to be given a chance.”

Violence on women

In RS there is a protocol since 2013 that clearly states and explains institutional actions in relation to family violence. There have been numerous education seminars for professionals within the institutions on subject of family violence, however they often don't follow the protocol or they misinterpret certain situations or they simply overlook crucial facts and they do not suffer the consequences for their mistakes and their indolence. For example: that woman is clearly victim of violence but in fear to say so or that the Roma child is a victim of child marriage etc. The Association actively advocates for legal measures to be taken against professionals that are not acting according to law. The changes are being made but there are still problems of inadequate control of the situation on the field especially since the start of pandemic. “We just had a meeting with representatives of Center for Social Work and we talked about changes in the Law on Family Violence and how the implementation of the new law came to force on January 5, 2020. It was really a bad time for new law to be implemented since, because of the pandemic we were not able to follow and investigate the levels in which it is implemented.”

Work and activities in the time of pandemic

Their focus has drastically changed due to pandemic. A great number of activities were stopped. They are still actively involved in collecting information from the field and in distribution of humanitarian help.

“A lot of families lost their income, it's hard to collect secondary materials when police hour is in practice. Those who worked on jobs where they were paid per diem also lost their jobs. People were on the brink of starvation because they have lost their regular incomes and it only depended on the day how much money they would be able to make. We worked a lot on collecting humanitarian help, therefore we organized ourselves into teams to be able to cover all of their needs from psychosocial needs to practical support because they are used to find our doors open for them all the time.”

5.8. Association “Maja Kravica”, Bratunac – Motives, vision, mission and target groups

The Association “Maja Kravica” was founded in 2001 with main goal of empowering the women for the fight for women’s rights through active inclusion of women in economic and political sphere in local community. They are members of numerous networks and they’re conducting a great number of projects as we speak. They have over 150 accomplished projects behind them. One of their major achievement was founding of first women’s cooperative in 2013. They approve grants for mini businesses as a segment of empowerment and strengthening of psychological and legal help.

Finances, strategies and plans

Their main sources of financing are projects in which they are involved on their own or in partnership with other organizations. They regularly work on making of strategic plans. These plans are periodically being revised. According to the many years of experiences they came to conclusion that donators are directing their donations and funds toward institutions that have organized system and secured budget for their work and less and less to smaller NGOs which are actually creative mechanism of the institutions.

Accomplishing visibility and cooperation with media

In their small community they are visible to their fellow citizens through direct contact. Bratunac lost their radio station and generally speaking they notice the passivity, political and economic influence on existing medias which affect the quality of their cooperation.

Cooperation with institutions

The cooperation with institutions is a one-way street where NGOs are seen as initiators but without proactive actions of the institutions. However, this type of cooperation is perceived as positive from the Association’s side: “We have good relationship with chancellor as well as with the Center for Social Work and Police. We often meet with them to discuss ongoing issues, however not in the measures that we would like but it’s all right.”

Capacities and competencies

They find that competencies in IT, marketing and communication to be crucial for further growth and visibility.

Marginalized groups and local community

Through their beneficiaries they are noticing a lack of legal and bureaucratic conditions for help and social benefits which further complicates the involvement of women and the possibilities for the actions. Exercising the right to financial assistance which is basic and minimal doesn’t allow them the possibility for income from additional work. “This is where the problem occurs for example: people that are exercising the right on family pension get their pension suspended in case they earn additional income. We are having issues with people in this kind of situation because we can’t send any money on their account.”

Young women are starting to involve in work and activities and they are mostly

interested in economic empowerment of women. Most of our young beneficiaries work in the agricultural field and wants to start their own businesses and become independent. "They need to register their agricultural holding in order to get social and pension insurance."

Basic living conditions of women in local community

The rural parts of Bratunac municipality are neglected and less and less populated which leads to a problem of public transportation since it's no longer profitable. Ambulatory cares are being closed in smaller areas which additionally complications already complexed health situation. "In our Association we have members that lives up to 30 kilometers away and participation of 3 KM is not enough when taxi costs 7 KM. One of our members have to take injection shots twice per day and her husband has only 200km income. It is impossible." They organize themselves within the municipality through programs for economic recovery and program of development and promotion of rural tourism. Association "Maja Kravica" is conducting projects of economic empowerment and through their involvement and activities they manage to animate institutions to get involved. "Regarding to that, we have one group on municipality level and we also have one work group that participates in awarding of grants for women victims of war. Women got this help and they used it well."

Violence on women

Due to the economic dependence and poverty, women often have to suffer a lot and in the context of violence on women the economic empowerment has once again proved to be the cure. The admittance of women, victim of violence in the Safe Houses depends on a lot of factors but mainly on the decision of Center for Social Work whose work is often inconsistence and without clear criteria. "A woman victim of violence can only be admitted in the Safe House in Bijeljina according to our protocol. We have a great cooperation with Women's Association Viva out of Tuzla but it still depends on Center for Social Work and will they refer you to them so we can be financed." There is an initiative already in motion but still without real outcome to award one apartment per 10 000 people instead of relocating women in some safe houses far away from their homes. The Association also advocates more active work in prevention of violence, therapies and work with the abuser. Members are also trying to change the system where the dominant solution will not be relocation of women while the man stays at home. After their admittance in the Safe Houses women do not have long term solutions available therefore, "Maja Kravica" try to focus the attention of employers in local community on involvement and participation. "We have a great example in the sawmill where one of these women work. They gave her a chance to learn and to get out of the circle of violence. I must say that they are extremely well socially oriented."

Work and activities in the time of pandemic

They have continued activities and kept the practice of meeting in person honoring and practicing all pandemic prevention measures by meeting out on the open. They shifted their focus more on social help. "We immediately offered our help to Red Cross by putting our self and our infrastructure on their disposal. We also got in touch with our donators whom we asked more for certain favors than for money."

5.9. Citizen's association "Probudi se ("Wake up"), Istočno Sarajevo - Motives, vision, mission and target groups

The Association was registered at the end of 2014 with the vision to make their local community, through their joint effort and ideas, an attractive agricultural and ecological touristic destination. They organized a lot of environmental and humanitarian actions. Their initial goals were not directly focused on fight for women's rights, but various projects and the profile of the members and founders of the Association shifted their attention on work mostly involved in women activism with a main focus on economic empowerment of women and long-term employment for unemployed women. They are especially proud of their agricultural touristic manifestation "Dani tikve" that they organize for the last few years.

Finances, strategies and plans

They are funded through projects.

Accomplishing visibility and cooperation with media

Using their resources and personal acquaintances they managed to build a good relationship with media.

Cooperation with institutions

During the organization of manifestation of "Dani tikve" they accomplish good cooperation with international organizations, municipal and city authorities as well as with the tourist board. The thing that they see as the biggest issue of the smaller NGOs is that in order to accomplish anything they have to make pressure on the institutions through their personal acquaintances with people within these institutions otherwise their reactions are slow and untimely. The separation between municipal authorities and leading political parties additionally complicates already complex situation because of their conflicts which greatly affects the work of the Association. "We have a specific situation here since we have members both from Istočno Sarajevo and Istočna Ilidža. There are two different political parties that rule in these two municipalities and they are extremely intolerant toward each other." There is a problem of unfunctional institutions and their inability to fulfill legal norms for which reason they have been founded for in the first place. The worst part in all of this is that they do not suffer any consequences or repercussions for their incompetence and a lack of involvement. "We have very limited number of projects and activities in general. By pure coincidence I know about the existence of the Gender commission due to my work but, if we would do a survey now, I am doubtful that any of the women would know anything about gender commission." There has been some support, for certain Women's organizations on municipal and entity level, but the support was conducted through some decisions and procedures that are not transparent and accessible to everyone.

Capacities and competencies

Internet marketing, promotion and placement of products, access to donors and writing projects.

Marginalized groups and local community

According to their experiences and work within the organization when it comes to

question of marginalized groups in local community most engaged in conversations and discussion are the members of refugee and displaced groups. "There are a lot of women that lived somewhere else for a long time and now they came back. Although a lot of time has passed since war and I am not sure whether we still need to talk about it or not, but these women are in underprivileged situation. When they were displaced, they were young and now when they would have supposed to enjoy their pensions they can't because they never managed to get employed. These are women with high school degree and they can only be helped by economic empowering and inclusion. Currently we are working with our members on giving them a chance to produce something, to create."

Basic living conditions of women in local community

Since the Association is dedicated to the question of living environment and improvement of living conditions, they are actively involved in finding solutions for garbage disposal locations that are inadequate and without permit. On the outskirts there is a problem of unregulated sewage and septic tanks that are polluting the ground and sources of clean water. The public transportation isn't properly regulated which affects mostly women. The number of gynecologists per resident is inadequate as well.

The Ministry of Agriculture provided us with 11 greenhouses with 10% less on participation if the beneficiary is a woman. This stimulated a lot of farms to be registered on women's name. Some improvements are clearly visible.

Violence on women

Women often don't report violence therefore the members find the raising the level of awareness and improving the conditions to be of a great importance. There shouldn't be any tolerance or head turning when it comes to question of violence on women.

Work and activities in the time of pandemic

Activities that were dominantly based on direct personal contacts and socializing and therefore are greatly reduced.

5.10. Women's Association "Srce i duša", Lukavac (Prokosovići) - Motives, vision, mission and targeted groups

Women's Association "Srce i duša" (Heart and Soul) from Prokosovići, Lukavac Municipality was founded at 2011 with a goal of uniting women so they can "start thinking about themselves and about their rights and obligations so they can work on self-improvement." Aside of their direct commitment on improvement of status and quality of life of women, the Association is engaged in finding solutions for ecological problems. Members of the Association are mostly women over 60 years of age.

Finances, strategies and plans

They are financing through projects and partnerships with other organizations and institutions. They make strategies for several years in advance and a yearly action plan as well as the evaluation of already accomplished activities.

Accomplishing visibility and cooperation with media

Their visibility is being accomplished by their work on the field and through various activities and work actions. Cooperation with media is on a good level.

Cooperation with institutions

The cooperation is somewhat limited but perceived as good and its mostly accomplished through personal connections. "When there are troubles than that's the way we have to do it. We work on self-improvement and we try to find who can help us. Some people donate money some clothes, some through projects..." The Municipality is providing funds through Project of Strengthening the Role of Women in Development of Local Community for development of women activism therefore supporting the work of women's associations.

Capacity and competencies

Computer literacy and more advance IT trainings are necessary for older generation of women that did not interact with computer science during their regular education. The majority of members of the Association belong to that generation.

Marginalized groups and local community

The draft of the budget goes straight to public debate where NGOS get their chance to vote. "We, as citizens and members of associations can attend these public debates where we have chance to object or give suggestions ... this way four years ago we managed to incorporate Children kitchen and some other smaller NGO co - financed." The Municipality is financing a part of the funds for public kitchen located near the school and their beneficiaries are mostly members of Roma minority. Young women are rarely involved in the work of organization. According to the experiences of the members of the Association there are two reasons for that. First, when a woman that is studying on the universities moves away, she will most likely never come back and second, if a woman gets married than commitment to family and children makes it too hard for them to spare time for any other activity.

Basic living conditions of women in local community

According to the women, members of the Association, Lukavac Municipality experienced a boom in the past few years which improved the quality of life of women in this area. The main problem still remains the pollution of environment that's affecting the health of residents. "Through one research that I've done together with the doctor from the Health Center we discovered that at least 30 % of the women have either cervical or breast cancer. Nobody stopped and asked themselves why? We discovered that the soil in this area is contaminated with heavy metals which affects the health especially with women. I am the most sorry that nobody deals with this issue." Women are not involved enough in politics and even when they get their chance they are not focused enough on right questions and improvement of status and quality of life of women. Commission for Gender Equality does exist but there are no clear criteria for election which further affects the quality of work of basic commissions. Occasionally there are calls for economic empowerment co - financed from the side of international organizations but the problem for many women is how to meet all of the conditions needed so many of them don't succeed. "An international organization recently issued a call for local communities to issue a call for women. One part is financed by the Municipality. Unfortunately, out of so many women in the Municipality of Lukavac, only five applied. And they do so many beautiful things, they could do so many beautiful things and charge for their work. This is what I am saying that we must empower these women through projects. Women are simply afraid; they are not sufficiently informed. They are not involved enough and they are not empowered enough."

Violence on women

The violence on women is mostly falsehearted and it's not recognized until the level of violence becomes too obvious. Economic violence often occurs as well.

Work and activities in the time of pandemic

They organized saving actions during the pandemic. Young women got involved as well, they went out on the streets and provided masks to citizens while collecting data on needs for support in their local community. The members focused their attention on help and support of women who lost their income due to the lockdown.

Conclusions and recommendations

Associating and joining with activities of women, regardless of goals and the desirable range of action, creates an atmosphere in which the foundations for empowerment and raising of the awareness of women's rights are made. In everyday practices of women from smaller local communities, the patriarchal code and certain patterns of behavior are still dominant. Social and cultural barriers are especially a problem in smaller communities, leading to isolation and lack of motivation among women for citizens' engagement. Joint efforts, as well as the simple exchange of experiences, knowledge, and burdens have a power to lead to critical questioning of the situation and the position forced upon us in everyday life. Women's associations that are not essentially feminist oriented also have indirect influence and meaningful contribution if they are provided a safe space for their evolution and growth, by women's ideals and standards.

The awareness in question of marginalized groups in smaller local communities often comes down to the point where they are only talked about in context of social problems, therefore limiting the possibility of empowerment and long-term solutions. Sluggishness and inadequate reactions from institutions at all levels of government leads to an accumulation of problems, along with a lack of capacities, competencies and possibilities for the evolution of the public sector and its systems of social protection. Dysfunctional systems that generate losses, uneven distribution, and paradoxical situations in which the most endangered people and those with the greatest needs suffer the most leads to the problem of insufficient planning and investing in systems of social protection. Systems flawed in these ways don't generate space for long-term solutions, instead leading to the possibility of only dealing with consequences without tackling the causes. As we already showed through the stories of our targeted organizations, women's associations are taking the responsibilities and roles of public service for all citizens in the local community. In the environment where there are no sufficient investments into the improvement of social care systems, NGOs are fighting to improve the living conditions and possibilities for work and action within local communities, so there is necessity to maintain a good relationships and cooperation with institutions. This, in turn, makes it hard for them to criticize their work.

According to the gathered data and the analysis of the existing documents, it is noticeable that cooperation between NGOs and institutions is evolving, but there are still problems of unclarity in conduct, jurisdiction, and consequences in the event of unfulfillment of their responsibilities, negligence in the performance of their duties, or failures in implementation. In these kinds of occurrences, the associations are called to participate but only as mere observers without the possibility of greater engagement. The problem is a lack of practice of active listening pertaining to needs and respect of women's initiatives. Projects and cooperation with authorities are so far conducted sporadically and through individual projects without continuity from the side of the institutions in charge. Although institutions conduct numerous educational courses for their professionals, the associations have observed that in the field these professionals do not act according to protocol or they miss certain actions or misinterpret the situation. For these reasons, we believe that it is necessary to improve the system of complaints and punishment in cases of discrimination and additional victimization.

Economic empowerment of women and marginalized groups in smaller local communities is sporadic and project-based, often supported by international organizations; however, for average women this remains inaccessible. As our interlocutors informed us, a small number of women apply to the announced calls for economic empowerment due to complicated prescribed procedures and requirements, lack of support and assistance for women who have an interest in applying, but for various reasons do not have the opportunity to apply.

Within local communities there is a problem of inefficiency of the institutions, services and commissions that exist to oversee legal forms. Without significant initiative, institutions do not adequately fulfill the purpose of their existence, due to the lack of commitment and competencies to handle any consequences.

The response of Central health institutions on our questionnaire from within chosen local communities is the lowest with only 3 answers which we can relate to difficult working conditions and overload of health system due to pandemic. However, we need to mention that even in previous researches, during the time when health system wasn't overloaded their response was the lowest⁴¹, which points to the possibility of lack of sensibility, lack of sense of co-responsibility and involvement in the chain of mutual efforts in solving wider social problems in direct and indirect correlation with questions of public health.

There are numerous international acts signed and ratified in BiH that are intended to protect basic human rights as well as rights of specific marginalized groups. They are given the highest legal power, but this has not resulted in their implementation and use in the institutions. These acts are mostly used as a base for convergence of domestic legislative with international standards, which was partly achieved, but unfortunately still with poor results. Very poor functioning of administrative and judicial bodies supports this claim. For instance, the largest number of petitions was filed to the Institution of Ombudsman of BiH, but unfortunately, that is the institution with the least legal power.

The citizens and the civil society organizations have meaningful mechanisms at their disposal when the issue of the protection of human rights is in question. In front of the domestic institutions those are judicial proceedings as well as the proceedings in front of inspections and other administrative bodies prescribed by Gender Equality Law and Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and also by some special laws in certain areas (labor, social protection, health insurance, etc.)

On the other side, there are the conventions of the Council of Europe and EU-developed bodies, and mechanisms for protection of human rights. Except for the possibility for citizens to directly address the committee, or in cases when the matter concerns the Council of Europe to address the European court of Human Rights, there are some possibilities given to non-governmental organizations to conduct alternative reports or so-called "shadow reports." These may serve to pressure the decision makers with initiatives for making recommendations that will be given from the side of the international organizations to Bosnia and Herzegovina after they submit their report on implementation of international acts.

Gender Action Plan BiH (GAP) recognizes the need for strengthening of cooperation between different participants (local authority units, academic community, private and non-governmental sector) in implementation of public politics in different areas of life in order to comply with gender equality. GAP recommends making local action plans and

41 T. Mandić-Đokić, T. Žarković, O. Stojković. Essential services: analysis of the access to support services (health, police and justice and social services) for women belonging to marginalised groups who have experienced violence, UN Women BiH, 2019.

founding commissions for gender equality, but so far that is only partly done in local communities.

Influence on the work of institution

- Ensure support systems within local women's associations for providing information and help with applying for available projects of economic empowerment of women;
- actively advocate and enable the system of support in case there is misuse from the side of the responsible subjects due to the lack of knowledge, information, poor social situation, or status of the beneficiary;
- ensure the availability of functional e-mail addresses of public institutions within smaller local communities;
- through cooperation with institutions, develop a system for including and building awareness within the business sector, especially in questions regarding how to bring possibilities and employment advantages to women and female victims of violence, in order to ensure long-term solutions;
- it is important to come to consensus and define actions of health institutions (for example, a psychiatric clinic in situations when the perpetrator of violence is an addict as well or a mentally ill person);
- it is important to upgrade the cooperation with prosecution and public courts, especially in the areas of more efficient sentencing and issuing urgent protection measures;
- advocate greater investments in the development of systems for social protection, especially the development and strengthening of working staff and capacities of the Centers for social work;
- advocate for more developed and continuous cooperation with organizations of civil society and the regular practice of field work within organizations and institutions;
- develop services, procedures and mechanisms specially oriented toward being equipped to receive victims of violence and women with disability;
- educate citizens, especially activists, on possibilities of the direct application of international regulations with domestic institutions and bodies, and provide them with encouragement and help in conducting activities for protection of their human rights;
- empower citizens, especially those active within the organizations of civil society, for more active engagement in decision making in local communities and for the use of local mechanisms for protection of gender equality by initiating a more active approach;
- empower the representatives of women's organizations to demand greater participation in decision making in their local community and to initiate positive changes when the planning of budgets for support of their activities is in question, as well as the reception of gender sensitive documents and gender responsible budgets, etc.

- actively advocate and invest in quality improvement and diversity of information available to public for systematic and regular running of evidentiary procedures and statistics from the side of the institutions in order to disable women and marginalized groups to remain invisible and to increase the possibility of planning and creating adequate reactions, politics, direct measures and activities.

Development of knowledge and capacities

- Mental health is neglected, especially with women, who according to traditional framing are expected to provide great amount of emotional work and commitment, so there is a substantial interest in psychological workshops;
- empower women and develop systems of mentorship, support, and counseling within bigger organizations toward finding solutions in the question of jurisdiction when citizens are addressing a problem in their community;
- education in the fields of internet marketing, social networks, and computer literacy are mentioned as subjects of great importance;
- other important topics include financing and writing projects for current donors, writing reports, holding seminars on ways measuring capacities of organizations, creating strategic plans, conducting administrative businesses, providing education on financial operations of the association and legal regulations;
- for associations that are primarily directed toward economic empowerment of women, education and seminars pointed in direction of promotion and placement of products is of great importance;
- in order to maintain the motivation for joint work, actions, and empowerment through education, it is important to establish a balance between personal development and the interests from one side and the development of capacities and competencies of the association as a whole, on the other side;
- improve the system of networking, cooperation and partnership within the NGO sector through development of women's networks and through peer support;
- with smaller associations there is a recognized need for mentorship and cooperation. In cases of mentorships, it is very important to find a proper balance between dominant and smaller associations and also to regulate and guarantee just and fair relationships;
- young women are focused on entrepreneur projects and on creating economic independence, and will join the associations and educations in case they see their opportunity for improvement of knowledge and competencies. They are interested in education that would lead them to economic empowerment and opportunities to gain practical knowledge and skills, such as culinary arts, canning, natural juice making, medical herbs, and product placement.

Focus on further research

It is important to additionally investigate the problem of neglect of responsibilities created by undefined and unclear bureaucratic procedures that create inefficiencies in the work of institutions and difficulties with identifying responsible subjects in the proceedings.

Specificity of municipalities

Banja Luka

- Initiate introduction of gender perspective into strategic and other legal documents and conduct planning and implementation of measures that monitor the specific position of women, especially women from marginalized groups;
- initiate the adoption of local action plan for gender equality that follows already developed strategic documents and demand greater engagement and influence of municipal commission in charge, among others, about the question of gender equality;
- through activities of Women's organizations increase awareness and sensitiveness for cooperation on question of gender equality, involvement of this question in everyday life and in decisions of institutions as well as the cooperation with organizations whose primary interests lies in the essence of this question.

Bijeljina

- Initiate the introduction of gender perspective into strategic and other legal documents and plan the conducting of measures that monitor specificity of women, especially women from marginalized groups;
- Through activities of Women's organization to increase the awareness of the representatives of the institutions to include in their decisions regular activities that are focused on marginalized groups and questions of gender equality.

Bratunac

- Start an initiative for renewal of strategic documents that already existed in Bratunac in order to improve the status of marginalized groups and gender perspective in this municipality;
- advocate for defining and improving work procedures and capacities of Center for Social Work, especially in context of development of clear and more transparent criteria for admittance of victims of violence into the safe house;
- improve the quality of work and visibility of formed Commissions for gender equality and define clear criteria for election of commission members.

Istočno Sarajevo

- Initiate making of strategic documents and action plans that will be used for improvement of conditions of various marginalized groups and during this process of advocating for this document to be adopted use declarative commitment for gender equality and conducting of human rights stated in the City Status;
- initiate solution for question of protection of women victims of violence in correlation to international standards and BiH regulations and to coordinate local policy in this regard;
- improve quality of work and visibility of existing Commissions for gender equality and clearly define criteria for election of commission members.

Konjic

- Through cooperation and joint planning with local institutions, initiate more substantial financial support to women's organizations, especially in already recognized areas: activities of strategic planning, conducting of traditional cultural manifestations, joint projects in area of security, position of vulnerable groups and minorities in local community and so on;
- improve quality of work and visibility of existing Commissions for gender equality and clearly define criteria for election of commission members.

Lukavac

- Improve cooperation with local institutions in order to achieve greater representation of questions of gender equality in strategic documents and in their practical implementation;
- improve quality of work and visibility of existing Commissions for gender equality and clearly define criteria for election of commission members.

Mostar

- Initiate making of strategic documents and action plans that will be used for improvement of conditions of various marginalized groups and during this process of advocating for this document to be adopted use declarative commitment for gender equality and conducting of human rights stated in the City Status;
- start an initiative for renewal of strategic documents that already existed in Mostar in order to improve the status of marginalized groups and gender perspective in this municipality;
- improve cooperation and exchange of information between institutions and NGO sector that acts in the chain of protection of socially endangered groups in order to provide more adequate protection through introduction of services for support and processing perpetrators of violence on appropriate ways.

Tuzla

- Improve quality of work and visibility of existing Commissions for gender equality and clearly define criteria for election of commission members.

Visoko

- Through cooperation and joint planning with local institutions, initiate more substantial financial support to women's organizations, especially in already recognized areas: activities of strategic planning, conducting of traditional cultural manifestations, joint projects in area of security, position of vulnerable groups and minorities in local community and so on.

Zavidovići

- Through activities of Women's organizations increase awareness and sensitiveness for cooperation on question of gender equality, involvement of this question in everyday life and in decisions of institutions as well as the cooperation with organizations whose primary interests lie in the essence of this question.

**ASSESSING THE CAPACITY
OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS
AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

Women Human Right Advocates

About CURE Foundation and Foundation for Women's Empowerment

CURE Foundation is a feminist-activist organization which promotes gender and sex equality and works for positive social changes through educational, cultural, and research programs. By organizing affirmative action CURE celebrates the strength and power of women, and helps empowering individuals to become initiators of social change in BiH and the world. The feminist activism has created a safe space where women are strong, fearless, competent, and united in all their differences. CURE is an organization of activists, professionals and volunteers who take to the streets to protest against violence, discrimination, violation of laws, women's rights and basic human rights, organize performances against violence, invite artists, scientists, educators, activists, citizens to action and concrete personal contribution in order to create a better and sounder society in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Foundation for Women's Empowerment is an independent and non-profit women's foundation based in Bosnia and Herzegovina fully committed for supporting initiatives of women's grassroots civil society organizations (CSOs) in promoting women's human rights, empowerment of women and gender equality.

The FWE was founded in response to numerous calls from the WGOs across the country to create a mechanism to channel technical and financial support for significant initiatives and the improvement of women's human rights, gender equality and social justice

About the authors

Tatjana Žarković has been raised and grew up in the spirit of feminism and peace activism since her first steps. Born in 1985 in Sarajevo, spent the first year of her life in Mostar, in a city she is still in love with. She spent the years of refuge in Belgrade, where she finished elementary and high school. At the age of 19, she returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina together with her sister and mother, who, as an activist of the Woman in Black from Belgrade, managed to find rescue from the rage of Slobodan Milošević in Sarajevo, who, before the “5th October Revolution”, harassed and imprisoned all prominent opponents of the regime. She graduated in Sarajevo and completed her studies of philosophy and sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo. She graduated in Vienna at the Faculty of Sociology at the University of Vienna. Love and motherhood make her return to her hometown in 2016. She has been researching since 2013 when she started working as a research assistant at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Vienna and currently working at the University of Sarajevo. In her research work, she primarily deals with migration issues, marginalized groups and gender issues.

Vera Zih was born on September 30, 1986 in Doboј, BiH. She graduated from the Faculty of Law of the University of Banja Luka in June 2010. As part of non-formal education, she attended several trainings for providers of legal and paralegal assistance, alternative reporting under international acts, gender equality and women’s rights, as well as training to advocate for greater implementation of rights, mainly of persons with disabilities, and media campaigns. Active first in the youth and then women’s movement in providing legal assistance, she was a lecturer or introductory speaker in numerous international and domestic conferences, trainings and workshops. She is a member of the Coordination Board of the BiH Women’s Network, and was a representative of women with disabilities in the Advisory body of women’s organizations for cooperation with the European Commission. In recent years, she has been focused on advocacy to improve the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities and women’s rights. She is the author of several analyzes in this field, the subject of which was mainly legal regulation and analysis of its effect on the everyday life of these groups. Currently, she is employed in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Srpska in the field of public relations

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