



***ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NGO FOUNDATION “UNITED WOMEN” BANJA
LUKA
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
2013***

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NGO Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka

Address: Kalemegdanska 18, 78000 Banja Luka

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Telephone/fax: +387 51 463 143

Telephone: +387 51 462 146

E-mail: office@unitedwomenbl.org

Web: <http://www.unitedwomenbl.org>

1. On NGO Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka

“United Women” Banja Luka is nonprofit, nongovernmental foundation, registered on 16 August 1996, in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. General aim of the Foundation is improving social position of a woman, and her right on life free from violence in a family and public life. We want to see more women at decision-making positions in governmental institutions at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Our vision is** "Woman aware of her power, equal, respected, employed, and happy." **Our mission is** "Strengthening and affirmation of women through advocacy and work on implementation of women's human rights in the practice."

Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka is working within **two program areas** – prevention and fighting violence against women, and strengthening role of women at decision making positions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

1.1 Analysis of the Context in Which We Implemented Activities in 2013:

1.1.1. Changes of Laws and Public Policies in the Area of Protection of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality

In 2013, the Law on Changes and Amendments of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina¹ has been adopted, and it harmonized **the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and European standards on representation of women in decision-making bodies**. Changes and amendments are directed on ensuring participation of at least 40% candidates of less represented sex in composition of the municipal election councils and voter's boards, as well as at the lists of candidates for the elections. The first effects of these changes in terms of increasing representation of women in legislative governance will be visible after the general elections in BiH planned for October 2014. In relation to these changes, it is important to emphasize that there are still bodies of political decision-making and governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina with no women members; such are the Council of Ministers of BiH and the Joint Presidency of BiH. The percentage of women's representation in the legislative bodies goes from 24.1% in the House of Peoples of Federation BiH Parliament, to 13.3% in the House of Peoples of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly. Positive changes toward increasing representation of women in executive governance are visible with appointment of the first female prime minister and 5 female ministers in the Government of Republika Srpska in March 2013.

In September 2013, the Council of Ministers of BiH adopted **the Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina (GAPBiH) for the period 2013 -2017**². GAPBiH is directed on implementation of three strategic objectives: preparation, implementation, and monitoring of the measures for improving gender equality in governance institutions in priority areas, preparation and strengthening of the system, mechanisms, and instruments for reaching gender equality, and establishing and strengthening partnerships.

At the state level of BiH, important activities were implemented with objective to strengthen implementation of the international standards in prevention and fighting violence. On 7 November 2013, Bosnia and Herzegovina ratified **the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Fighting**

¹ The Law on Changes and Amendments of the Election Law of BiH, Official Gazette of BiH, No. 18/13

² Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Period 2013 – 2017, available at the web page of the Gender Center of RS Government, direct link http://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/centri/gendercentarrs/media/vijesti/Documents/130517_GAP%20BiH%202012-2017_FV.pdf

Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence³, as the legally binding international document directed at all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence. Among other, the Convention seeks for strengthening judicial protection of women survivors of violence, through ensuring efficient investigation, judicial procedure, and implementation of the procedural law and protection measures that are enabling women survivors of violence to access protection of their rights, especially in terms of preventing victimization. Bosnia and Herzegovina is 6th country member of the Council of Europe that ratified the Convention⁴, and therefore took over the obligation to implement it through enabling legislative and institutional conditions for prevention and fighting violence against women and punishing the abusers.

At the end of 2013, the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated preparation of the **Strategy for Implementation of the CoE Convention on Prevention and Fighting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence for the Period 2014 -2018**, as well as the **Action Plan for Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for the Period 2014 – 2017**.

At the level of Republika Srpska, governmental institutions established joint standards for procedures in the cases of domestic violence. On 25 November, the International Day of Fighting Violence Against Women, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, and the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Sport in Government of Republika Srpska signed **the General Protocol on Procedures in Cases of Domestic Violence**. Objective of this Protocol is ensuring efficient, coordinated, and comprehensive actions of the subjects of protection. In relation to that, it is necessary to monitor continuously the effects of adopting procedures for action, and improving work of subjects of protection in Republika Srpska, in terms of ensuring support and assistance for women and children survivors of domestic violence, by nongovernmental organizations and governmental institutions.

It is important to emphasize that during 2013, **the Criminal Code of Republika Srpska changed**, with focus on the criminal acts that are recognized as gender based violence, and largely, directed against women. New security measures are introduced – prohibition of contacts and communication with a certain person, obligatory psychosocial treatment, removal from a common household – and the court can order them to the perpetrators of criminal acts with elements of violence. Obsolescence of criminal prosecution for the criminal acts against sex integrity, as well as for the criminal acts against marriage and family committed against minors starts from majority of a victim. Changes of the Criminal Code of Republika Srpska also defined that hate crime is a criminal act committed entirely or partially based on racial, national or ethnic status, language, religious believes, color of a skin, sex or sexual orientation, health status or gender identity. Criminal sanctions for the criminal acts against sex integrity are strengthened, as well as for the criminal act of deprivation of a minor, within the criminal acts against marriage and family. The article related to the criminal act of violence in a family or family community changes in terms of more precise definition, and qualifying acts of violence, strengthening criminal sanctions for various forms of violence in a family or family, incriminating violation of protection measures from domestic violence ordered by the court based on the law, as well as defining persons that should be perceived as members of a family or family community. Latest changes of the Criminal Code of

³ Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, 12 April 2011. Available on English language at official web presentation of the Council of Europe, Direct link:

<http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/convention/Convention%20210%20English.pdf>

⁴ Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina International Contracts, no. 19/13. In the period of preparing this Report, 23 states members signed, and 11 states members of the Council of Europe ratified the Convention, as follows: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Lithuania, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Great Britain. Data are from the official web presentation of the Council of Europe, Direct link:

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/default_en.asp

Republika Srpska introduced changes of the title of the criminal act of trafficking for prostitution into incitement of prostitution, and introduced new criminal acts of trafficking of people, trafficking of minors, and organizing criminal organization for committing criminal acts of trafficking of people and trafficking of minors.

1.1.2. Violence Against Women and Other Forms of Violence Against Women Persist and Are Very Visible in the Practice

Issues of protection of women's human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be marginalized, both in terms of political priorities, and in terms of social development. Women and issues of importance for women remain invisible in the process of constitutional changes dominated by male leaders of key parliamentary political parties.

It is noticeable that governmental institutions continued with the practice of open violations of BiH laws aimed to ensure gender equality, without any sanctions, and weak public reactions and criticism. On 23 October 2013, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina proposed seven male members of the Council of the Regulatory Agency for Communications BiH (RAK BiH), without paying attention on equal representation of women and men, and neglecting rang list prepared by the Parliamentary Ad Hoc Commission for implementation of the procedure of appointing RAK Council of BiH, with a female journalist from Banja Luka ranked as the second, considering her qualifications for this position. This proposal was verified by the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, with neglecting the obligation to respect the BiH Gender Equality Law, BiH Anti-Discrimination Law, and BiH Law on Communications that regulate obligation of equal representation of women and men in this and other decision making bodies.

Police⁵ and media reports indicate **increase of reported cases of domestic violence in Republika Srpska for 70%**, however, precise data on prevalence of domestic violence are still unavailable, as there is no joint data base of the primary subjects of protection (police, centers for social work, health centers, and judicial institutions) on various administrative levels (local, cantonal, entity, and state level).

In 2013, the BiH Agency for Gender Equality prepared the first comprehensive **Study on Prevalence and Characteristics of Violence Against Women in BiH**, which confirms that women in Bosnia and Herzegovina are exposed to high risk of violence, both in their immediate environment within a family, and a wider community. Results of the Study indicate that almost half of women over 15 years of age were exposed to various forms of violence at least once in their lifetime, especially psychological violence combined with physical violence.⁶

Unemployment of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to grow – from 50.19% of participation of women in total number of unemployed persons in January 2013, to 50.67% in November 2013.⁷ This influences increase of feminization of poverty in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and points at lack of efficient strategies for improving economic position of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁵In the period January – December 2013, 37 criminal acts against sexual integrity were registered, in relation to the 2012, when 29 criminal acts in this area were registered. Out of 37 criminal acts, 15 criminal acts of rape, 12 criminal acts of sexual violence against a child, 1 criminal act of incest, 3 criminal acts of sexual violence against a helpless person, 1 criminal act of abusing children and minors for pornography, and 5 criminal acts of attempted rape. Within the same period, 453 criminal acts of violence in a family or family community were registered, which represents the increase of 70% in relation to the 2012. Information on Status of Security in Republika Srpska for the Period January – December 2013. Banja Luka, January 2014, Ministry of Interior Affairs of Republika Srpska. Available at web page of the Ministry, direct link: http://www.mup.vladars.net/statistike_pdf/cir/1199177970011840.pdf

⁶The Study also points out that in the period of one year prior to the research, 11.9% women in Bosnia and Herzegovina were exposed to some form of violence. 41.9% stated they were victims of psychological violence in some period of their life, while 10.8% stated they were victims of this type of violence during the previous year. 24.3% women stated they were exposed to physical violence in some period of their life while 2.4% of women stated they were exposed to this type of violence during the previous year. The Study on Prevalence and Characteristics of Violence Against Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Agency for Gender Equality of BiH, June 2013. Available at the official web presentation of the Agency, direct link: http://arsbih.w1.daj.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/studija_prevalenca.pdf

⁷Data Base on Economic Indicators of Republika Srpska, Investment and Development Bank of Republika Srpska (IRBRS). Available at the direct link: <http://www.irbrs.net/Statistika.aspx?tab=8&lang=lat>

2. Gender Sensitive Services of Support and Assistance for Women and Children Victims of Domestic Violence

2.1 Free Legal Assistance and Advices for Women and Children Victims of Violence

In 2013, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka continuously provided free legal advices, assistance and information for women victims of domestic violence of all age categories from Banja Luka and local communities that are in the Banja Luka region. **We provided free legal advices and information for 243 women and free legal assistance for 76 women.** More than 85% women that contacted us for the assistance in 2013 were unemployed, or they covered their living costs from the limited social assistance, child supplement, or low family retirement payment. Employed women that contacted us for help are working mostly on temporary low paid jobs with private employers (bakeries, shops, baby sitting, etc.) IN majority of cases, their social and health insurance is not covered. All women beneficiaries expressed need for not only legal assistance, but also psychological support, which we provided during legal counseling. Approximately 40% of women that approached to us for legal assistance also received support from clinical psychologist that works with women beneficiaries of the Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Banja Luka. This support was needed in terms of receiving advices how to deal with violence they survived in the past, and complicated legal procedures.

2.2. SOS Telephone for Victims of Domestic Violence and Gender Based Violence

In May 1997, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka established the first telephone service for psychological support and assistance for women and girls victims of violence in Republika Srpska. During 2013, women students of psychology and social work, and long-term women activists were on duty shifts on SOS telephone every day, including weekends and holidays in period from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM. During working days from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, professional staff of the Foundation was providing assistance for women and girls in need. Since 2005, Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka initiated cooperation with NGO „Lara“ Bijeljina, NGO „Future“ Modriča and NGO „Women’s Center“ Trebinje, and with support of the Gender Center of RS Government, we continued this important service for women and girls through short SOS number 1264. Women volunteers are regularly participating in trainings for providing SOS support, and they contribute to planning and implementation of the public advocacy activities for prevention and fighting gender based violence against women in a family, namely activities of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence in BiH.

During 2013, women volunteers and professional staff of the Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka provided **direct psychological support and legal assistance for 1373 persons** through SOS telephone. Out of total number of SOS calls, 10 calls were related to male victims of violence – 3 adult men and 5 boys, while rest of the calls were related to female victims of violence, namely from 22 to 60 years of age, 1360 male abusers were reported, namely from 22 to 60 years of age, and 13 women. In majority of cases, abuser is marital partner of a victim, employed, with completed high school education.

2.3 Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Domestic Violence Banja Luka

Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka was established on the initiative of “United Women” Banja Lu, and it was opened on 12 February 2007. This service of support obtained all needed permissions of the authorized official institutions, and meets law binding standards. Furnished and functional housing space of the Safe House is 229 m², on the parcel 803 m², and can accommodate twenty-four (24) women and children. Activities of the Safe House include shelter and protection of women and children in periods of acute violence in a family, psychosocial support and assistance through individual and group work basic medical assistance, psychotherapeutic work,

entertaining workshops, social and emotional development, physical and health education, creative culture, health services and care).

During 2013, total sixty – six (66) persons were sheltered – thirty (30) women and thirty – six (36) children (23 girls and 13 boys) victims of domestic violence. Six children were sheltered without parental guidance. In relation to a case of one woman, authorized center for social work did not provide decision on sheltering to the Safe House, while for two (2) women and six (6) children, the authorized Ministry refused to recognize right on sheltering and accommodation in the Safe House, although center for social work did not issue decision.

All decisions that are important for children sheltered in the Safe House without parental care were adopted in agreement with the temporary guardian. The largest number of women sheltered in the Safe House Banja Luka in 2013 was from 30 to 50 years of age. Fifteen (15) children were up to four (4) years of age, ten (10) children were from five (5) to ten (10) years of age, six (6) children between ten (10) and fourteen (14) years of age, while five (5) children were between fourteen (14) and eighteen (18) years of age. Three (3) women in late pregnancy used shelter of the Safe House as victims of violence committed by their family members, and they received additional care due to their specific needs. Children sheltered in the Safe House without parental guidance were between eleven (11) and seventeen (17) years of age. During their stay in the Safe House, they continued with attending school, and one underage person was accommodated to an institution for permanent care.

Women and children beneficiaries of the Safe House Banja Luka in 2013 came from the areas of Banja Luka, Gradiška, Srbac, Bihać, Kneževo, Laktaši, East Sarajevo, Prnjavor, Prijedor and Čelinac.

During their stay in the Safe House Banja Luka, all women received continuous and free legal assistance and support provide by the professional staff members of the Foundation.

2.4 Group for Support for Women Former Beneficiaries of the Safe House Banja Luka

In 2013, three-hour monthly meetings of the Group for Support were organized with women former beneficiaries of the Safe House Banja Luka. Each meeting gathered a group of 20-30 women that received shelter and support in the Safe House Banja Luka during previous years, and which expressed need for continuous support through group socio-educational work and self-help groups. Group members had the possibility to exchange experiences, help each other through identifying ways of regaining control over life issues, and to receive support of the professional team in the Safe House Banja Luka. As a part of the Group for Support, we organized thematic workshops, and enabled women participants to learn basics of communication skills, human rights, women's human rights, gender and sex, election process and why is important to support women, and being healthy workshops through alternative and contemporary medicine.

2.5 Individual Counseling and Group Socio-educational Work With Domestic Violence Abusers

In cooperation with NGO „Family Network“ Banja Luka, Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka supported continuous individual counseling and group socio educational work with domestic violence abusers from Banja Luka Region. **During 2013, hundred and twenty (120) domestic violence abusers accepted individual work, and ten (10) of them also joined group socio-educational work during February 2013.** Group work consist of twelve (12) modules within which domestic violence abusers have the opportunity to build awareness on various forms of violence and their influence on family, conflict resolution, anger management, nonviolent communication, etc.

3. Cooperation and Coordination with Nongovernmental Organizations and Governmental Institutions in Fighting Against All Forms of Gender Based Violence Against Women and Strengthening Participation and Influence of Women in Decision Making Processes

3.1 Contribution to Work and Development of the Safe Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Safe Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the network of nongovernmental organizations active on prevention and combating gender based violence against women. During 2013, the Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka enabled organization of the meetings for the BiH Safe Network Secretariat in October, and participated in regular meetings organized by the women's groups members of the Networks. We continued cooperation with the organizations members of the BiH Safe Network in terms of capacity building of women civil society activists in the area of fighting violence against women, developing public advocacy activity plan for increasing awareness about gender based violence in BiH, and improving position of women survivors of violence. Women's groups that are active in the Secretariat of BiH Safe Network are "Vive Žene" Tuzla, „Woman BiH“ Mostar, „Future“ Modriča, „Medica“ Zenica, „Women to Women“ Sarajevo, „Women from Una“ Bihać, „Foundation of Local Democracy“ Sarajevo, and Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka.

3.2 Improving Implementation of Laws and Public Policies in the Area of Prevention and Fighting Violence Against Women

With support of Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung for Southeastern Europe, Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka continued to coordinate activities on implementation of the **Program Platform for Cooperation of Women in Governance and Women Civil Society Activists in BiH for Period 2010 -2014**. More than forty (40) women parliamentary representatives at all levels in BiH, women at decision making positions in executive governance, including female ministers in Government of Republika Srpska, and women civil society activists. In 2013, Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka organized preparation of the analysis of the results accomplished as a part of the joint work under the Platform. The Analysis was presented to women that support the Program Platform on four (4) thematic workshops with participation of more than eighty (80) women and men representatives of gender equality mechanisms/bodies within legislative and executive governance at the entity and state level, and Brčko District BiH, as well as women civil society representatives active in the area of protecting women's human rights and gender equality. Women participants identified new priorities related to monitoring implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, and harmonization of the domestic legislation with the provisions of the Convention, adoption of the strategic plans for work of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality in Brčko District BiH, campaign of support to women candidates at the general elections in BiH in 2014, and improving support to women victims/witnesses of war crimes, sexual abuse, and other criminal acts. Women signatories of the Program Platform expressed commitment for continuing cooperation in 2014, and to support newly elected women parliamentarians after 2014 General Elections in BiH in terms of implementing principles and activities of the Program Platform.

More than seventy (70) women and men representatives of the parliamentary commissions for gender equality at the entity, state, and level of Brčko District BiH participated at the meetings that Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka organized in 2013, with objective of strengthening cooperation and exchange of information in the area of protecting women's human rights and gender equality in the practice. We supported establishing of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality in Brčko District BiH, as well as the preparation of the strategic plan for work of this institutional body on gender mainstreaming in all laws and public policies.

Women activists of nongovernmental organizations Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka, “Future” Modriča, “Helsinki Citizens Assembly” Banja Luka, “Bridge” Višegrad, and “Lara” Bijeljina participated on two (2) consultative meetings with Željka Cvijanović, Prime Minister of Republika Srpska. Meetings were organized in March 2013, in the period when Željka Cvijanović was Mandatory for composition of new Government of Republika Srpska, and in November 2013, at the beginning of the Campaign 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. Women civil society activists informed Prime Minister Cvijanović on progress of cooperation of women civil society activists and women that participate in political decision making within the Program Platform. The Prime Minister emphasized importance of gender mainstreaming in preparation and implementation of future public policies of Republika Srpska Government, and agreed there is a need for establishing Advisory Body that would improve communication of women in executive governance and NGO sector. Organizing thematic meetings with representatives of civil society organizations on the initiative of Prime Minister Cvijanović points at recognizing work of women’s NGOs toward improving networking, cooperation, and support for women in political decision-making.

In 2013, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka continuously organized working meetings, round tables, and workshops with participation of women and men representatives of key subjects of protection from domestic violence in Republika Srpska (police, centers for social work, health centers, courts, and prosecutor’s offices). We enabled them to learn about new international standards in the area of prevention and combating violence against women, namely the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Fighting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. We also presented our views and demands related to the process of adopting new Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of Republika Srpska, and jointly conducted mapping of the challenges and directions for improving multi-disciplinary approach in prevention and fighting violence against women.

3.3 Developing of the Model for Support for Victims/Witnesses in Cases of War Crimes and Gender Based Violence Through Strengthening Capacities and Cooperation of Civil Society Organizations and Public Institutions in BiH

In partnership with NGO „Medica“ Zenica, Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka conducted activities aimed to contribute to establishing network of support for victims and witnesses in cases of war crimes, sexual abuse, and other criminal acts related to gender based violence. In 2013, a Working Group was established in Republika Srpska, composed of women and men representatives of the relevant ministries, institutions, governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Objective of the Working Group was to develop official documents to determine authorities and obligations of all sides in providing assistance and support. Basis for development of the Protocol are needs of victims/witnesses to receive all comprehensive and efficient support, equal access, and treatment. Activities were including working meetings, education of women and men representatives of the public institutions, and a final Conference on which key participating organizations and institutions signed the Protocol for Supporting Victims/Witnesses in Cases of War Crimes and Gender Based Violence at the local level.

As the result of the activities implemented in 2013, cooperation was established with other public institutions and civil society organizations with objective of providing better quality of support for victims/witnesses. Activities of the signatories of the Protocol were defined in accordance with the existing legal authorities. Level of policies for communication and sharing information of the public institutions and civil society organizations improved, commitment of signatories of the Protocol to intervene in line with the best practices. Conditions were met for continuous monitoring and registering cases of war crimes, sexual abuse, and gender based violence. Established network for support within the Protocol enables transferring positive experiences in work with victims/witnesses of war crimes and other criminal acts of gender based violence to other areas of Republika Srpska.

4. Public Advocacy in the Area of Prevention and Fighting Violence Against Women and Strengthening Participation and Influence of Women in Decision Making Processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina

4.1 Coordinated Efforts – Toward New European Standards in Protection of Women from Gender Based Violence and the Campaign “I Sign”

In 2013, Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka continued regional partnership and cooperation with the Autonomous Women’s Center from Belgrade (Serbia), Center for Women Victims of War ROSA Zagreb (Croatia), National Council for Gender Equality Skoplje (Macedonia), Society SOS Telephone for Women and Children Victims of Violence Ljubljana (Slovenia), and VAWE Network (Women Against Violence in Europe) from Austria, on advocacy for implementation of the international standards on preventing and fighting violence against women. As a part of this project, with the support of the European Union through IPA Civil Society Partnership Program, together we work establishing comprehensive legislative solutions and policies for protection of women from violence in the Western Balkans, as condition to reach democracy, securing human rights, social inclusion, and harmonization with the European values. Objective of the project is to strengthen capacities of women’s civil society organizations and networks in four (4) Western Balkan countries, for analysis, monitoring, and advocacy in the area of protecting women from violence through long-term regional cooperation and learning from experiences of the European Union.

Activities in 2013 were directed on advocacy for ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka in cooperation with the local partner organizations "Woman BiH" Mostar, "Medica" Zenica, "Lara" Bijeljina, "Rights for All" Sarajevo and "Future" Modriča, during 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence in 2013 (25 November, the International Day of Fighting Against Violence Against Women – 10 December, the International Human Rights Day) organized continuous street actions, guerilla actions, television and radio programs, TV and radio clips, leaflets, billboards, and other materials, advocated for full implementation of the Convention, and called citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to support the Campaign Potpisujem.org for implementation of the Convention.

The Campaign was directed to informing women and men citizens and parliamentarians with the provisions of the Convention, and needs for harmonization and implementation of the politics, strategies, and laws with the Convention. With the Campaign, we want to influence on changing awareness of the entire society that any form of violence is not acceptable and right way to solve problems, and to inform women and men citizens on obligations that Bosnia and Herzegovina took over with ratifying the Convention, which includes comprehensive protection of women and prevention of violence, prosecuting and punishing the abusers, and effective and efficient system for monitoring implementation of the Convention. Implementation of the activities will continue in 2014.

4.2 Monitoring of the Judiciary Toward Gender Equality in BiH – Monitoring of the Criminal Proceedings in the Area of Gender Based Violence

In 2013, with support of Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation from Sweden, Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka and the Center for Legal Assistance for Women” Zenica, in cooperation with the partner organizations „Lara“ Bijeljina, Women’s Association „Bridge“ Višegrad, and Citizens’ Association „Future“ Modriča, we implemented independent monitoring of the criminal proceedings in the area of gender based violence in front of the targeted basic and district courts in Republika Srpska and municipal and cantonal courts in Federation BiH. Focus of the monitoring was on support and assistance of the courts and other subjects that are participating in the criminal proceedings (public prosecutors, centers for social work) are providing to women survivors of violence that are participating in the proceedings and witnesses. Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka, in cooperation with women monitors from the

partnership organizations, directly monitored criminal proceedings in front of the basic and district courts Banja Luka, Dobož, Bijeljina, Basic Court of Sokolac, and District Court of East Sarajevo. We also conducted indirect monitoring through the analysis of verdicts on criminal acts in focus of monitoring, sent by the Basic and District Court Trebinje.

Monitors were monitoring court sessions and preparing summary reports per each session, based on the common form, and they also collected additional data related to monitored cases, with objective of ensuring good quality findings on current practices of judicial institutions, analysis, and developing recommendations for improving protection of women as victims in the criminal proceedings of gender based violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the monitoring period, monitors, analysts, and coordinators of the Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka and the “Center for Legal Assistance for Women” Zenica had periodical coordination meetings with objective of exchanging experiences on monitoring process, and agreeing on the form of the final analytical reports for Republika Srpska and Federation BiH, which influenced on improving process of independent monitoring of the criminal proceedings in this area, and strengthening capacities of women monitors.

This is the second initiative of monitoring criminal proceedings of gender based violence⁸ and contrary to the last one, it was implemented in relatively longer period, included more courts in active and passive monitoring, and included more women’s nongovernmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the process of preparing and implementing monitoring, and public advocacy for changes of policies and practices in improving judicial protection of women survivors of violence. Final reports and the analysis will be published in 2014, and presented to the courts, prosecutors, centers for social work, as well as to the relevant ministries and public institutions with a mandate directly related to monitoring and improvement of judicial institutions.

4.3 Strengthening Capacities of Public Institutions of Brčko District for Work on Gender Equality Issues

In 2013, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka, with support of the Fund for Implementation of the Gender Action Plan in BiH (FIGAP), administered by the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH, implemented the activities directed to creating conditions for establishing institutional mechanisms for gender equality and protection of women’s human rights in Brčko District BiH, developing cooperation and partnerships of legislative and executive governance institutions of Brčko District BiH, on prevention and combating gender based violence in a family, improving participation of women in decision making, and increasing awareness of women and men citizens on need of developing laws and public policies in the area of protection and promotion of women’s human rights and gender equality.

Project activities included organizing working meeting with women and men representatives of legislative and executive governance in Brčko District, with objective of presenting the project activities and previous actions of women’s nongovernmental organizations in BiH toward strengthening cooperation with governmental institutions, capacity building workshops directed to improving knowledge on gender stereotypes, key gender equality issues – prevention and combating gender based violence in a family and participation of women in politics and decision making, role of public institutions in improving gender equality, as well as previous experiences and results in work of the institutions and nongovernmental organizations on these issues in BiH, strategic planning workshops for women and men representatives of legislative and executive governance with objective of developing mid-term strategic plan of activities for establishing and work of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality in Brčko District BiH, as well as

⁸ During 2011, Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka, in cooperation with the Foundation „Lara“ Bijeljina, and with the financial assistance of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) BiH implemented 8-month monitoring of 87 criminal proceedings for acts of gender based violence in front of the Basic and District Courts in Banja Luka, Basic and District Court in Bijeljina, and Basic Court in Dobož, and passive monitoring through received court verdicts of the Basic Court of Sokolac, and Basic Court of Trebinje.

organizing public discussions with women and men representatives of parliamentary political parties, public institutions and NGOs with objective of increasing awareness on need for establishing of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality, gender based violence in a family, and participation of women in decision making in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During 2013, as the direct result of implemented activities, the Gender Equality Commission of Brčko District Assembly, as well as the Working Group for Gender Equality in Brčko District Government. Bylaws on work of these bodies were developed, and budget allocations increased for maternity leave for women that gave birth to third child or had twins, and indirectly increase maternity leave from 12 months to 18 months in Brčko District.

Women and men parliamentarians in Brčko District Assembly and employees of the Brčko District Government, women and men members of NGOs and political parties that are active at the territory of Brčko District adopted and improved knowledge on the international and domestic obligations in the area of gender equality, namely those related to establishing institutional mechanisms for gender equality, as well as gender roles. Strategic planning workshop enabled also the planning the bylaw and working plan for the Gender Equality Commission of Brčko District BiH.

4.4 Prevention of Gender Based Violence – Education in the Elementary Schools in Rural Areas

With support of IN Foundation, and approval of the Ministry of Education in RS Government, in 2013, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka initiated work on prevention of gender based violence through education and cooperation with the targeted elementary schools in rural areas of Gradiška and Banja Luka. In the first phase of the implementation, we planned and implemented activities of establishing cooperation with schools, preparation of educational material and implementation of the workshops with boys and girls students of eight and ninth grades in the elementary schools in Laminci and Dubrave, and women and men teachers and professional staff of these schools. Activities of this project will continue in 2014 through education in targeted elementary schools in Banja Luka area, and promotion of the activities and project results through thematic radio programs, workshops with parents, and a round table.

4.5 Public Advocacy for Focusing of the European Union Progress Report for BiH in 2013 on Status of Women’s Human Rights

In the period February – March 2013, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka prepared and submitted to the Delegation of the European Union in BiH our written contribution for the EU Progress Report for BiH, with focus on women’s human rights and gender equality. Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka invited the European Union to use its authority and available mechanisms, and undertake stronger activities and supports to the efforts of women’s nongovernmental organizations in BiH toward improving women’s human rights in the practice. We suggested that the Report should integrate recommendations to the Bosnia and Herzegovina to, without delay, ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, ensure harmonization of the laws on domestic violence on the level of BiH entities, ensure recognition of the domestic violence only as criminal offense, recognize domestic violence as gender based violence, and take all necessary measures to ensure access to free and gender sensitive assistance and support for victims of violence, in accordance with the international standards.

Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka invited the European Union to support efforts of women’s NGOs in BiH, and emphasize lack of women’s participation in political decision making, within the chapter of the EU Progress Report for BiH in 2013, in relation to political criteria, in a part that analyses status of democracy, rule of law, and human rights.

On 7 November 2013, Bosnia and Herzegovina ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Decision on ratification was published in the Official Gazette of BiH – International Contracts no. 19/13)

4.6 Public Reaction on Cases of Violence Against Girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In April 2013, together with women's NGOs members of the Women's Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka signed and sent the public reaction in relation to increase of violence against girls in BiH. We invited public institutions at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina to recognize violence against women and girls as the public issue, take public responsibility, and ensure processing perpetrators without delay, as well as to practice zero tolerance for violence against women and girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We sent our public reaction to all electronic and printed media throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, and key institutions of legislative and executive governance.

4.7 Preparing Addendum to the Shadow Report on the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and Participation at the 55th Session of the CEDAW Committee

In the period April – May 2013, Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka participated in **preparation of the addendum to the Shadow Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina on CEDAW**, as the part of the coalition of eight nongovernmental organizations that are working on promotion and protection of women's human rights, gender equality, and human rights in general – "Rights for All" Sarajevo, "Lara" Bijeljina, "Medica" Zenica, "Sarajevo Open Center" Sarajevo, "Future" Modriča, "Collective" Zenica, Foundation "CURE" Sarajevo, and Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka. Representative of the Foundation "United Women" participated on the 55th Session of CEDAW Committee held in July 2013 in Geneva, and IWRAW workshop „From Global to Local“, and together with women representatives of "Rights for All" and "Sarajevo Open Center" from Sarajevo, presented findings and recommendations of nongovernmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Addendum to the Shadow Report in BiH on CEDAW Convention focuses on changes that occurred since 2010, with focus on the status and protection of rights of women with disabilities, women in rural areas, and LBT women. During IWRAW workshop, women activists from BiH prepared oral statement in front of the CEDAW Committee, and participated in the session of presenting official governmental report for BiH on implementation of CEDAW Convention. On this occasion, they had the possibility to present additional information on key challenges and recommendations related to status of women's human rights and gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4.8 Request for Respecting Gender Equality in the Process of Appointing Members of the Council of the Regulatory Agency for Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina

In October 2013, Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka submitted the request to the Council of Ministers of BiH in relation to the appointment of all male members of the Council of the Regulatory Agency for Communications of BiH, the body that monitors and regulates area of broadcasting and telecommunications in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We protested on the decision of the Council of Ministers of BiH to ignore one female candidate that met conditions for appointing in this Body, and was ranked 2nd on the narrow list of potential appointees. We sent the letter to both houses in the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, and requested from women and men parliamentarians to ensure full implementation of the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Law on Communications of BiH, and Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of BiH. In January 2014, both houses of BiH Parliamentary Assembly ignored our request, and approved appointment of male candidates for members of the Council of the Regulatory Agency for Communications of BiH. We will continue with public advocacy and pressure on institutions to ensure equal representation of women and men in decision making bodies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4.9 Preparing Comments on the Pre-Draft of the BiH Action Plan for Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325⁹ on Women, Peace and Security for Period 2014 – 2017, and the BiH Framework Strategy for Implementation of CAHVIO¹⁰ for Period 2014 - 2018

In December 2013, based on the public call of the Gender Equality Agency of BiH, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka prepared and submitted comments on pre-drafts of two important documents in the area of protecting women’s human rights and gender equality. In relation to Pre-Draft of the BiH Action Plan for Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, among other, we requested recognizing women’s nongovernmental organizations as the strategic partners for multi-sectoral networking and capacity building for increasing participation of women in security forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In relation to Pre-Draft of the Framework Strategy of BiH for Implementation of CAHVIO, among other, we requested for women’s NGOs to be recognized as integral part of systemic education of women and men professionals in this area, with objective of promotion and sustainability of multi-sectoral model and approach to the area of prevention and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

4.10 Initiative “Women Citizens for Constitutional Changes”

With support of Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation from Sweden and in cooperation with the “Helsinki Citizens Assembly” Banja Luka, during 2013, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka continuously participated in public advocacy activities for improving access and influence of women in constitutional changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the Initiative “Women Citizens for Constitutional Changes”. The Initiative exists as an informal group of nongovernmental organizations, women’s groups, and women and men activists that are advocating for protection of human rights and freedoms, and are contributing to reaching more just participation of women and men citizens in public and political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Initiative is promoting highest values of social justice, rule of law, and direct democracy as the fundamental values that are guaranteeing increasing living conditions and political stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During 2013, seventeen (17) organizations supported the Initiative, as follows: „TPO Foundation” Sarajevo, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka, “Helsinki Citizens Assembly” Banja Luka “Women’s Forum” Bratunac, “Future” Modriča, “Forma F” Mostar, “Rights for All” Sarajevo, Foundation “BIH Women’s Initiative” Sarajevo, “Sarajevo Open Center” Sarajevo, Foundation “CURE” Sarajevo, “Vive Women” Tuzla, Association of Women Citizens Grahovo, “Krajiška Suza” Sanski Most, Foundation “Lara” Bijeljina, “Glas žene” Bihać, “Medica” Zenica, and PILPG. As a part of the Initiative, the document *Platform of Women’s Priorities for Constitutional Changes with Amendments on BiH Constitution from Gender Perspective* that was presented to the public through eight (8) round tables, presentations, and working meetings with participation of women and men representatives of governmental institutions at all levels, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, media, and women and men citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Platform includes five (5) key principles, as follows: introducing gender sensitive language in BiH Constitution with objective of reaching full gender equality, expanding the existing catalogue of human rights with provisions related to common criteria of health, social and family protection, expanding judicial and legal protection of human rights and freedoms, and principle of the direct democracy applicable on the process of constitutional reforms.

⁹ UNSCR 1325 is the United Nations Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security, adopted in October 2000

¹⁰ CAHVIO refers to the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of November 2013

4.11 Campaign 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 2013, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka, in cooperation with the “Helsinki Citizens Assembly” Banja Luka organized the workshop for planning of the activities during the Campaign of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence in BiH, during which we agreed about joint materials and activities of the Campaign of ten (10) women’s NGOs that expressed interests for cooperation – Foundation „CURE” Sarajevo, „Women’s Forum” Bratunac, „Smile of a Woman” Laktaši, „Duvanjke” Tomislavgrad, „Women’s Center” Trebinje, „Center for Legal Assistance for Women” Zenica, „Most” Višegrad, „Okvir” Sarajevo and „Kult” Sarajevo. We coordinated preparation of the joint Calendar of Activities for the 16 Days of Activism, and translation of the Calendar on English language that was published on the global web page of the 16 Days of Activism administered by the Center for Global Women’s Leadership from USA. We also prepared local language translation of the Toolkit for the 16 Days Campaign, which we distributed to the interested organizations and public institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. During the Campaign, in cooperation with the “Helsinki Citizens Assembly” Banja Luka, Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka organized four (4) street actions in Banja Luka: on 23 November – guerilla action at the Krajina Square , and street actions on 3, 4, and 10 December 2013, during which we distributed materials of the Campaign, and informed women and men citizens of Banja Luka on ways of preventing and fighting violence against women and mechanisms of assistance – services for women and children survivors of violence. Additional activities of the Campaign 16 Days of Activism in 2013 included participation in radio and television programs.

5. Financial Overview of the Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka in 2013

	Donor	Project Title	Project Period	Amount EUR
1	Foundation Kvinna till Kvinna Sweden	Woman and Law Today	01/01/2013 – 31/12/2013	90.595,85
2	Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport of RS Government	Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence Banja Luka (70% of running costs)	01/01/2013 – 31/12/2013	75.000,00
3	City Administration Banja Luka	Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence Banja Luka (30% of running costs)	01/01/2013 – 31/12/2013	21.475,00
4	Autonomous Women’s Center (AWC) Belgrade, Serbia/EU IPA	Coordinated Efforts – Toward New European Standards in Protection of Women from Gender Based Violence	01/12/2012– 30/11/2014	115.958,04
5	Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung of Southeastern Europe	Improving Participation in Governance and Gender Sensitive Policy Making in Bosnia and Herzegovina	01/01/2013 – 31/12/2013	40.000,00
6	Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees BiH/Fund for Implementation of Gender Action Plan (FIGAP BiH)	Strengthening Capacities of Governmental Institutions of Brčko District for Work on Gender Equality Issues	01/10/2013- 31/12/2013	12.271,00
7	Amica e.V. Freiburg/BMZ Germany	Fighting Against Violence Against Women	01/01/2013 – 31/12/2013	24.785,00
8	Center for Legal Assistance for Women Zenica /Foundation Kvinna till Kvinna Sweden	Monitoring of Judiciary Toward Gender Equality in BiH	01/01/2013 - 31/08/2014	36.365,02

9	MEDICA Zenica/UNWomen	Models of Support for Victims and Witnesses of War Crimes Through Strengthening Capacities and Cooperation of Nongovernmental Organizations	01/11/2012 – 05/06/2013	4.463,60
10	In Foundation/Kinderpostzegels Netherlands	Preventive Activities of Gender Based Violence in Schools	01/09/2013 – 31/08/2014	12.070,00

6. Organizational Structure of the Foundation „United Women“ Banja Luka in 2013

6.1 Management Board

Nada Golubović, President
 Dragana Dardić, member, Executive Director of the NGO "Helsinki Citizens Assembly" Banja Luka
 Dijana Pejić, member, Executive Director of NGO "Genesis Project" Banja Luka
 Ljiljana Sokolić, member, Ombudsperson for Insurance of Republika Srpska
 Mile Dmičić, member, professor at the Faculty of Law, Banja Luka University

6.2 Professional Staff

Jelena Jeličić, Office Coordinator
 Lana Jajčević, Coordinator, Program Coordinator for Prevention and Fighting Violence Against Women
 Minja Damjanović, Executive Director, Program Coordinator for Strengthening Role of Women at Decision Making Positions
 Miroslav Samardžić, Financial Manager
 Aleksandra Petrić, Program Director

6.3 Professional Staff of the Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence

Amela Bašić Tomić, Coordinator
 Dragana Miljević Mirković, Social Worker
 Jasminka Pavić, Nurse
 Marieta Grbić, Nurse
 Gordana Vrbica, Nurse
 Nada Jeličić, Housekeeper – Secretary