

ANNUAL REPORT

**FOUNDATION "UNITED WOMEN" BANJA LUKA
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

2016

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FOUNDATION “UNITED WOMEN” BANJA LUKA BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 2016

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1. On Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka

“United Women” Banja Luka is nonprofit, nongovernmental foundation, registered on 16 August 1996, in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our general objective 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.

Vision

Woman aware of her power, equal, respected, employed, and happy.

Mission

Foundation United Women Banja Luka is committed to the lives of women and children without violence and increased impact of women in public and political life through the promotion and protection of women’s human rights in BiH.

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 Context in Which We Implemented Activities in 2016

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

No progress has been identified in terms of improving legislative framework for increasing participation of women in political decision making. In May 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Bosnia and Herzegovina rejected proposed changes and amendments of **the Law on Council of Ministers of the BiH** aimed to harmonize it with the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality of the BiH. Proposed changes had the objective to ensure representation of at least 40% of less represented sex as appointed members of state level government body, and provision that BiH Parliamentary Assembly cannot confirm their appointment without fulfillment of this quota. This indicates lack of the political will of the BiH parliamentarians to support implementation of gender equality in political decision making in BiH, and improve qualitative representation of women at top

decision making positions within executive governance. The Council of Ministers of the BiH has been one of the BiH level bodies with the lowest representation of women. In the period from 1997 to 2014, there were only four women ministers (Bisera Turković, a Minister for the European Integrations in two terms, Azra Hadžiahmetović, a Minister of Trade and Economic Relations in three terms, Mila Gadžić, a Minister of External Trade and Economic Relations in one term, and Ljerka Marić, a Minister of Finance and Treasury in one term), while no women were presidents or vice-president of this body since its establishing.¹ Two women are ministers in the current session of BiH Council of Ministers, at the positions of a minister of defense and a minister of human rights and refugees of the Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina still does not have BiH level strategy for human rights and non-discrimination. In 2016, a gradual progress has been identified in terms of improving legal protection of LGBT persons against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual characteristics. In July 2016, the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly adopted **the Law on Changes and Amendments of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of the BiH**, and recognized sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual characteristics as the basis for prohibition of discrimination. Additionally, **the Criminal Code of the Federation BiH** was amended in April 2016, and now includes definition of a hate crime, with wide list of protected grounds, including sex, sexual orientation, and gender equality.

At the end of 2016, the Government of the Republic of Srpska presented a **Draft of the new Criminal Code of the Republic of Srpska** which, among other novelties, introduced important changes related to harmonization of the Criminal law protection for some of the forms of gender based violence with the international standards set in the *Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)* and the *Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention)*. Approved draft of the new Criminal Code introduces establishing and managing a special register of persons convicted for criminal offences against sexual integrity of a child, and introduces a new chapter that regulates criminal offences against sexual abuse and exploitation of a child. Within criminal offences against life and body, new are the criminal offence of the female genital mutilation and the criminal offence forced sterilization. As a part of the group of criminal offences against citizens' rights and freedoms, new is the criminal offence of stalking, within the group of criminal acts against sexual integrity new are the criminal offence of sexual extortion and the criminal offence of sexual harassment. Finally, as a part of the criminal acts against marriage and family, new draft of the KZ RS introduces criminal

¹ Group of Authors: "1995-2015: Women and Political Life in Post-Dayton BiH", Sarajevo Open Center, 2015, page 70

offence of forced marriage. Public consultations related to the Draft Law will be conducted in the first part of 2017. If adopted, these changes will significantly improve formal legal protection of women and children from gender based violence.

Gender Based Discrimination and Violence Against Women Persist and Visible in the Practice

Limited official statistics indicate **continuous increase of violence against women and gender based discrimination** in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2016, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Srpska revealed 60% increase of the criminal offences against sexual integrity and 22% increase of the criminal offence of domestic violence comparing to 2015.² Despite overall formal progress on harmonization of the laws and public policies with the international standards in this area, governmental institutions throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina are continuously **lacking harmonized methodology and data collecting on various forms of violence against women and gender based discrimination**. Governmental institutions in both BiH entities established data bases to collect data from subjects of protection, however, these only cover domestic violence cases, and data are insufficiently transparent to the public. There is no public information how these data are analyzed and used in terms of improving public policies and status of women survivors of violence, namely to ensure their access to assistance and protection.

Report of the Ombudsman of BiH for 2016 indicates **lack of real progress in reaching equality of women and men at the labor market**. Cases of lying off pregnant women are common, and women engaged in grey economy are not integrated in the formal labor market. The Report is also pointing that women are not equally paid as men for the same work, and there is no harmonized system of the protection of rights of women using maternity leave, including payments for women in this status.

Despite the efforts of public institutions to direct special attention on prohibition of discrimination and promotion of gender equality through laws, strategies, and public policies in the area of health prevention and protection, the practice shows these regulations are only declarative and formal. Women, especially those from marginalized categories such are women with invalidity, women in rural areas, victims of war, and Roma women **do not have equal and non-discriminatory access to health in all areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina**. Major problems are related to lack of health services adjusted to the needs of women and lack of sensitive approach of health professionals in providing services of prevention and protection of health.³

² "Information on Status of Security in the Republic of Srpska for the Period January –December 2016", the Ministry of the Internal Affairs of the Republic of Srpska, Banja Luka, January 2017

³ "Annual Report on Results of the Institution of Ombudsman for Human Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2016", Banja Luka 17 March 2017

Topics related to sexual and reproductive health are not integral part of the obligatory curricula, and are limited to occasional educations for limited number of boys and girls students, organized by civil society organizations, without systemic approach to training of teachers. Additional problem is that **gender based violence and discrimination are, as a rule, rarely linked with sexual and reproductive health**, especially the right to choose when, how, and with whom to have sexual intercourse as well as to use contraception. This places additional stigmatization on need for comprehensive education on sexual and reproductive health, pushes it far away from the educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and lowers the chances for sustainable prevention and protection of health for young people of both sexes.

Women and topics of importance for women remain invisible in media throughout BiH, as indicated by the media monitoring conducted by the civil society organizations during the period prior local elections in 2016 that revealed 0,5% news articles focusing on women's human rights and gender equality in six monitored online, electronic, and printed media.⁴

2. Gender Sensitive Support and Assistance for Women and Children Survivors of Violence

What We Do → Focus on Wellbeing and Empowerment of Women and their Children → Enabling Their Right to Decide and Be Protected

Since early 1997, **providing assistance and support to women and children** survivors of domestic violence, and other forms of gender based violence has been one of the core activities of the Foundation United Women Banja Luka. We are providing free legal advices and assistance, psycho-social assistance, safe house/shelter for women and children survivors of violence, as well as SOS telephone for women and girls survivors of violence and discrimination.

Services for women and children are based on **gender sensitive approach**, and oriented toward protection of their human rights and wellbeing. Our priority is to protect their safety and empower them to make independent decisions to continue lives free from violence. **Foundation United Women Banja Luka closely links direct support for women and children with our public advocacy work.** Women and children beneficiaries of our services are continuously helping us identify problems related to violence

⁴ "Media Monitoring", the Initiative "Women Citizens for Constitutional Changes", October 2016

they are experiencing, shortages of laws and public policies, and malpractices of public institutions that are subjects of protection (police, judicial institutions, centers for social work, health institutions, etc.)

2.1 Assistance and Support during 2016

Free legal advice and information – 243 women

Free legal assistance (writing various petitions and requests) – 76 women

We continuously provided assistance and information for women of all age categories from rural and urban communities in Banja Luka region. **More than 85% women that contacted us for the assistance in 2016 were unemployed, or they covered their living costs from the limited social assistance, child supplement, or low family pension.** Employed women that contacted us for help are working mostly on temporary low paid jobs with private employers (bakeries, shops, babysitting, 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 they received during legal counseling. Approximately 45% 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.

Direct psychological support and legal assistance provided by professional staff in 2016 through SOS telephone - 1225 women

During 2016, SOS psychological support and assistance for women and girls survivors of violence was available 24/7, and provided by the professional staff of the Safe House. 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. We cooperate with women’s NGOs in Federation BiH who contribute to short SOS telephone 1265 through the activities of the Safe Network of BiH, rising awareness campaigns, and media presentations.

Safe House for Women and Children Survivors of Domestic Violence Banja Luka – Data for 2016

70 women and children beneficiaries from eleven (11) local communities in the Republic of Srpska, as follows:

Banja Luka, Gradiška, Kneževo, Laktaši, Šipovo, Mrkonjić Grad, Ribnik, Prnjavor, Oštra Luka, Prijedor, and Srbac.

Women Beneficiaries	29							
Children Beneficiaries	41				Girls 25		Boys 16	
Stay of Children in the Safe House	Together with Mothers				Without Parental Guidance			
	40				1			
Age	Women				Children			
	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-70	0-4	5-10	11-14	14-18
	3	6	4	3	16	11	9	5
Educational Background of Women	No Education		Elementary School		High School		University	
	-		11		17		1	
Employment of Women	Employed		Unemployed		Retired		Student	
	5		22		1		1	
Relation with Abuser	Spouse		Common Law Partner		Mother		Other	
	15		10		1		2	
Duration of Violence (months)	0-4		5-10		11-20		21-30	
	19		4		5		1	
Exit Strategy	Return to Life With Abuser				Independent Life			
	7				18			
Return to the Safe House	3							

Activities of the Safe House include shelter and protection of women and children in periods of acute domestic violence, psychosocial support and assistance through individual and group work, basic medical assistance, psychotherapeutic work, creative workshops, social and emotional development, physical and health education, creative culture, health services and care). All decisions that are important for children sheltered in the Safe House without parental care were adopted in agreement with a temporary guardian.

In 2016, women and children survivors of violence had limited access to the Safe House due to **lack of financial resources planned for sheltering the victims in the budgets of local communities**. Some centers for social work did not use possibility of sheltering women and children in need to the Safe House even in the most difficult cases of violence, with the argument that no conditions were met under which they could use this protection measure. This relates not only to those local communities that did not have planned resources for sheltering victims, but also to those local communities that have planned financial means, but they were not sufficient to cover specific needs of women and children survivors. Although the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Republic of Srpska enables women survivors to request from the authorized centers for social work to issue temporary measure of sheltering in the safe house, none of the requests were approved in 2016.

The Foundation United Women Banja Luka consider important for women to have **access to information about their rights**, as well as authorities and responsibilities of the public institutions in terms of providing assistance and support for women to exercise their rights in the practice. Trained lawyer and legal assistant of the Foundation United Women Banja Luka are working continuously with women beneficiaries during their stay in the Safe House, and also have regular communication with the women and men professionals from the centers for social work and police to ensure full support for women and children in need.



Meeting of the Foundation United Women Banja Luka and women representatives of the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Sport of the Republic of Srpska Government in relation to the financing of the safe houses and access of women and children survivors of domestic violence to the services of support

We care for engagement of the local community and private entrepreneurs on supporting women and children survivors of violence. At the end of 2016, a group of women and men activists from Banja Luka collected sweets and donated for children beneficiaries of the Safe House during winter holidays. This grown into the initiative for establishing **the Facebook group “Vama staro nekom novo”** (Your Used Staff are New to Someone), as a social network platform for continuous exchange of information and donating used furniture, home appliances, clothes, and other necessities for women and children current residents of the Safe House, but also those women who exited the Safe House and started independent life. “Manja” Bakery from Banja Luka continued to provide their products for the Safe House beneficiaries on daily basis, and we continued with the long-term campaign targeting private companies to provide jobs for women beneficiaries.

We continued cooperation with the Faculty of Philosophy, Department for Social Work at the University of Banja Luka, and provided **internships for students of social work.** They had the opportunity to learn more about working practices of the Safe House Banja Luka, and work directly on providing assistance to women and children beneficiaries.

3. Networks, Partnerships and Coalitions → Sustainable Influence on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women

3.1 BiH and Regional Level

Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka builds networks, partnerships, and coalitions with other women’s and human rights civil society groups and organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, region, and beyond. We recognize and value joint power of arguments, creativity, and knowledge in advocating for women’s human rights. Since 2002, Foundation United Women Banja Luka participates in work of the Safe Network of BiH.

During 2016, the Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka contributed to the meetings of the **BiH Safe Network** 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, advocacy for improved institutional response on prevention and combating gender based violence against women and girls, and developing cooperation with the public institutions and institutional mechanisms for gender equality. 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.

The Foundation United Women Banja Luka is a member of **the network of women's NGOs that provide SOS assistance for survivors of violence through the short number 2164**, established in 2005. We are one of the founding members of **Women's Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **RING NGO Anti-Trafficking Network of BiH** through which we continuously advocate for improved protection of women's human rights and gender equality in the practice.

In 2016, Foundation United Women Banja Luka continued with activities within the **regional initiative of advocating for full implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence** (Istanbul Convention), as the partner organization to the Autonomous Women's Center from Belgrade (Serbia), Center for Women Victims of War Rosa from Zagreb (Croatia), Gender Equality Council from Skopje (Macedonia), SOS Telephone for Women and Children from Ljubljana (Slovenia), Women's Center from Podgorica (Montenegro), and WAVE Network. At the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we advocated for establishing rape crisis centers for victims of sexual violence. We received the information from the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH that in upcoming period the institutional mechanisms for gender equality will conduct legal and feasibility study in relation to this obligation from the Istanbul Convention. As a part of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, we joined the regional campaign under slogan **"I Do Not Tolerate Violence Against Women"**, and advocated for nomination of BiH candidate for GREVIO as the international expert body that monitors implementation of the Istanbul Convention in countries members.



Workshop on Developing Methodology for the Alternative CEDAW Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013 - 2017, organized by the partner organizations the Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka and Prava za Sve Sarajevo, February 2016, Banja Luka, BiH

Foundation United Women Banja Luka contributed to the preparation of **the Report of the Civil Society Organizations on Implementation of the Concluding Observations and Recommendations of CEDAW Committee for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013 – 2017** (Alternative CEDAW Report), namely in the part related to prevention and combating violence against women. report is the result of joint action of the group of activists and civil society organizations active in the field of protecting women's human rights and gender equality from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the coordination of "Helsinki Citizens Assembly" Banja Luka and "Rights for All" Sarajevo. During process of its drafting, several workshops and coordination meetings were held with the aim of joint definition of key indicators, priority areas and methodologies, which contributed to its value especially in the direction of strengthening women's activist movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina aimed at monitoring and advocating compliance with the obligations of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the *Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*. Activists and organizations that have contributed to its making have collected data, analyzed the situation, and defined the specific recommendations by areas, as well as the prioritized general recommendations that require urgent, continuous and systematic actions of government institutions at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina towards enabling women of Bosnia and Herzegovina unhindered and non-discriminatory access to the realization and protection of basic human rights and freedoms.

In partnership with NGO Vive žene Tuzla, NGO Medica Zenica, and Agency for Cooperation, Education and Development (ACED) Banja Luka, the Foundation United Women Banja Luka continued to work on **establishing and strengthening multi-disciplinary local networks throughout BiH for supporting women and men survivors/witnesses of war crimes, sexual violence, and other criminal acts**. We are directly working with multi-disciplinary networks in Banja Luka, East Sarajevo, and Bijeljina region, through facilitating periodical networking meetings, contributing to education of women and men professionals from public institutions and NGOs to strengthen their direct assistance and support to women and men survivors/witnesses, and rising awareness on status, rights, and needs of survivors/witnesses. Additionally, the Foundation United Women Banja Luka signed several protocols at cantonal level in FBiH, with objective of providing assistance and support to witnesses/survivors through our services.

Together with the Center for Legal Assistance for Women from Zenica, Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka worked in 2016 on **monitoring judicial response on sexual and gender based violence** through monitoring and analysis of the four hundred and four (404) criminal and minor offence proceedings at twenty-two (22) targeted courts throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Joint recommendations are calling for harmonization of the entity laws in BiH in the area of preventing and combating gender based violence with the international standards, with focus on the Istanbul Convention, introducing stricter penalty policy for gender based violence in the context of general and special prevention, enabling access to free and sensitized legal assistance for women survivors

of violence and witnesses in the proceedings at all courts in BiH, ensuring continuous education and improved sensibility of professionals from various sectors relevant for prevention and combating violence against women, establishing practice of directing the victims of gender based violence to specialized NGOs that are working on providing legal assistance, in order to ensure free and good quality of legal support to victims, organizing intensive multimedia and informative – educational campaign for promoting possibilities of submitting compensation claims in the criminal proceeding, and creating preconditions for economic empowerment of women victims of gender based violence.

3.2 International Level

Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka is a member organization of **Women Against Violence in Europe (WAVE) Network**. Representative of the Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka participated at 18th Annual WAVE Conference held from 19 to 21 October, 2016 in Berlin (Germany). Focus of the Conference was on implementation of the Istanbul Convention, prevention of femicide, increasing standards in providing services for women survivors of domestic violence, as well as responsibilities of the states to implement the international obligations aimed to protect women from all forms of violence. Participants of the Conference were women activists and practitioners from 36 European countries. Foundation United Women Banja Luka supported **“Step Up!” Campaign**, as the European-wide initiative launched on 25 May 2016 promoting the rights of women survivors of violence and their children to access support and protection. Launched nationally in WAVE Member countries, and internationally from the WAVE office, this campaign aims to step up efforts in Europe to stop violence against women, raise awareness of the problem, and protect survivors through activities which target different stakeholders and decision-makers.



*Women participants of the 18th Annual WAVE Conference,
19-21 October, 2016 Berlin (Germany)*

Representative of the Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka participated at the Conference "**Building Healthy Intimate Relationships**", organized from 22 to 23 September, 2016 in Athens (Greece) by the European Anti Violence Network (EAWN) and the Smile of the Child. The main aim was to promote the development of **healthy and equal relationships** between the sexes and the development of **zero tolerance towards violence** by raising teens' awareness via exclusively experiential and active participation methods. We exchanged experiences with women's NGOs working on providing direct support to women and children survivors of violence and public advocacy for prevention and combating gender based violence.



Women participants of the Conference "Building Healthy Intimate Relationships" 22 - 23 September, 2016 in Athens (Greece)

3.3 Launching the Fund for Economic Empowerment of Women Survivors of Violence

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Foundation United Women Banja Luka, we initiated the **Fund for Economic Empowerment of Women Survivors of Violence**, with the objective to support women to start a life free from violence through pre-qualification, self-employment, initiating small business, and other forms of economic empowerment. Through the long term direct work with women survivors of violence, we learned that in majority of cases of domestic violence, women remain in violent relationships due to economic dependence from the abuser. This is also one of the major reasons why women survivors of violence are returning to a common life with abuser after leaving the Safe House. With establishing this Fund, the Foundation United Women Banja Luka wants to create opportunities for women survivors of violence to make independent decisions about their future, take control over their lives, and reach economic independence.

During the initial period, we succeeded to collect approx. 6000 EUR individual donations of women and men citizens, private and public companies, institutions, and civil society organizations. The Fund will remain active during upcoming year, with the intention to make it sustainable source of support for women in need, through continuous public campaigns of calls for donations and support.

The Foundation United Women Banja Luka team members and supporters at the fundraising event organized on the occasion of 20th anniversary of the Foundation and launching the Fund for Economic Empowerment of Women Survivors of Violence



3.4 Cooperation with Governmental Institutions and Women in Politics

Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka believe that sustainable change in prevention and combating gender based discrimination and violence against women requires advocacy toward governmental institutions at all levels, collaboration with women in politics and at decision making positions, and involving men as active contributors to these processes.

In 2016, we continued to cooperate with the parliamentary commissions for gender equality at BiH, entity, and Brčko District levels, women and men parliamentarians, inter-sectoral working groups to influence improvements of public policies and laws in the field of women's rights and gender equality.



The Conference "Cooperation of Governmental Institutions with Women's Civil Society Organizations on Implementation of the CoE Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, May 2016, Sarajevo, BiH Parliamentary Assembly



Street March on the International Women's Day, Banja Luka 2016

Representative of the Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka contributed to the work of the *Council for Combating Domestic Violence*, as the inter-sectoral working body of Republika Srpska Government that supervises implementation of the RS Law on Protection from Domestic Violence.

During 2016, Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka continued with regular meetings with parliamentary commissions for gender equality and BiH Agency for Gender Equality, as well as RS and FBiH Gender Centers. Together with women parliamentarians at entity, state and Brcko District BiH levels, as well as women's CSOs throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, we worked on implementation of the priorities set up in the *Program Platform for Cooperation of Women in Parliaments and Women NGO Activists for 2016 – 2018*.

Key advocacy actions conducted during 2016 were, as follows:

Advocacy for changes and amendments of the BiH Election Law: to recognize obligatory 50% for women candidates, with alternate distribution of positions at the election lists of political parties. We contributed to this initiative of the Sarajevo Open Center, NGO Medica Zenica, and other women's CSO members of BiH Women's Network. Additionally, UWBL supported the initiative of Sarajevo Open Center related to *changes of the BiH Law on Council of Ministers* to recognize obligatory 50% seats for women ministers. These two proposals are in line with the BiH Gender Equality Law, and were supported by the Commission for Gender Equality of BiH Parliamentary Assembly, due to our advocacy toward this parliamentary body. UWBL sent the initiative to all BiH level parliamentarians, and ensured international support through involvement of the European Women's Lobby (EWL). At the end of April 2016, BiH Parliamentary Assembly rejected the proposed change of BiH Election Law. However, the action prevented decrease of already recognized women's quota (40%) at the election lists in the BiH Election Law. Changes of BiH Law on Council of Ministers were also rejected by the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, at the end of May 2016, although the proposal was adopted in the first reading in April 2016.

Advocacy against discrimination of women on maternity leave in Federation BiH: UWBL supported the action of women's CSOs in FBiH, initiated and led by Zene zenama Sarajevo, to ensure that women on maternity leave in cantons have undisturbed and equal access to maternity leave payments. Club of Women Parliamentarians in FBiH Parliament supported the action, and in March 2016, the House of Representatives in FBiH Parliament officially voted yes for the initiative. In the time of preparing this report, the process of harmonizing FBiH cantons' legislation is ongoing.

Advocacy for improving status and public budget support for the Safe Houses for women and children victims of violence in FBiH: UWBL supported the initiative of NGO Medica Zenica for changes and amendments of the FBiH Law on Protection from Domestic Violence to improve the status of Safe Houses in FBiH, in line with the FBiH Law on Citizens' Associations and Foundations, and to ensure continuous public budget support (from entity and cantonal level) for fixed and variable costs of sheltering women and children survivors of violence. In the time of preparing this report, the proposal law is undergoing public discussion.

4. Project Results

4.1 Ensuring Access to Justice for Victims/Witnesses through Strengthening Existing and Establishing New Networks of Support to Witnesses throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina

Foundation United Women Banja Luka is implementing this three-year project since 2015 as the partner organization to Vive Žene Tuzla, together with Medica Zenica and ACED Banja Luka, with support of the European Union. Overall project objective is to improve access to justice and rehabilitation for the conflict affected victims/witnesses through provision of prompt multidisciplinary support in order to prevent conflict and contribute to durable peace in BiH.

In 2016, United Women Banja Luka coordinated development and establishing of two (2) victim/witness support networks in the regions of East Sarajevo and Trebinje. The networks involve women and men professionals from the centers for social work, centers for mental health, judicial institutions, local administrations, as well as CSOs working with victims/witnesses, and representatives of the associations gathering victims/witnesses. Protocol for establishing the Network for the East Sarajevo Region has been signed in February, while two regular meetings of the Network aimed for developing Protocol of mutual cooperation for the Network in region of Bijeljina were held in February and May 2016, resulting with preparing final draft of the Protocol to be signed in the beginning of 2017.



Campaign on 26 June, the International Day of Support for Victims of Torture 2016

We continued to coordinate regular meetings of the Network for region of Banja Luka. Women and men representatives of centres for social work and centres for mental health from 5 local communities in Banja Luka region (Prijedor, Srbac, Čelinac, Laktaši, and Kozarska Dubica) expressed the interest to join the Network for region of Banja Luka, and actively participated in the trainings on psychosocial approach in working with victims/witnesses organized as a part of the project activities. This could potentially increase the access of victims/witnesses in need for assistance and support in the whole Banja Luka region. Additional six (6) regular meetings of multidisciplinary teams were held during June, July, August, and November 2016, and contributed to the increase of cooperation between professionals that provide psychosocial services, as well as support, and understanding of needs for continuous assistance and support to victims/witnesses among policy level stakeholders at targeted levels.



Campaign on 26 June, the International Day of Support for Victims of Torture 2016

Methodology assessment workshop of 5 victim/witness support networks (VWSN) and expert debates to improve communication among members of VWSNs in Republika Srpska (Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Istočno Sarajevo, Trebinje, and Doboј) was held in April 2016, resulting with presenting methodology of VWSN development, exchanging opinions on models of cooperation, discussing challenges and practice in providing support to victims/witnesses. First and second modules of trainings for professionals within VWSNs were held for East Sarajevo (May and November 2016), Banja Luka (June and October 2016), and Bijeljina (June and November 2016). A professional supervision meetings of established VWSNs were held for Banja Luka (in September and December 2016), Istočno Sarajevo (September 2016), and Bijeljina (September 2016).

Awareness rising public events were organized to commemorate *26 June, the International Day of Support for Torture Victims* (5 public events, including central street manifestation in Banja Luka, and street actions in Modriča, Višegrad, Trebinje and Bijeljina),

and 10 December, the International Human Rights Day (8 public events in Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Višegrad, Modriča and Trebinje, including street actions, street performances, theatre plays, TV program, and mannequin challenge).

4.2 Improving Prevention and Combating Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Overall goal of two-year project supported by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation from Sweden is fair and equal protection and access to justice for women victims of gender based violence. Project activities are contributing to improved justice system response at the level of BiH entities to protecting and supporting victims of gender based violence, and combating impunity of perpetrators.

In the period from April to the end of November 2016, together with the Center for Legal Assistance for Women from Zenica, we conducted comprehensive monitoring of the criminal and minor offence proceedings in the area of gender based violence. The monitoring in the Republic of Srpska was conducted in the partnership with the Women's Association Most from Višegrad, the Citizen's Association Budućnost from Modriča, and the Foundation Lara from Bijeljina. It was primary directed on mapping and analyzing the status of protection of rights and recognizing needs of women and children survivors of gender based violence that are appearing as injured persons/witnesses in the judicial proceedings, the penalty policy, and making positive influence on improving procedures and practice of the judicial institutions and other subjects of protection in the area of prevention and combating gender based violence, and contributing to the establishing coordinated and efficient system of protection directed toward support for women and children survivors of violence. The monitoring targeted twelve (12) basic and district courts throughout the RS, and BiH Brčko District.



Capacity building workshop for monitors, 30 March – 01 April 2016, Banja Luka

Women CSO activists of the United Women Banja Luka and partner organizations observed seventy-nine (79) criminal cases of gender based violence, and seventy-six (76) minor offence proceedings for domestic violence.

The United Women Banja Luka and the Center for Legal Assistance for Women in Zenica received support from the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of BiH, which sent recommendation to all targeted courts to allow access to the court sessions for women monitors. In several targeted courts, the monitors had access to the court sessions that were closed for the public, which indicates recognizing us the status of expert public, and willingness of the courts to be open for dialogue on reforms that would lead to improved access to the justice and judicial protection for women belonging to vulnerable groups.

Women's CSOs involved in the initiative have developed two-year advocacy plan that focuses on the advancement of legal and public policy framework on prevention and combating gender based violence, and ensuring its feasibility in the practice, strengthening capacities of judges, prosecutors, police officers, professionals engaged in the centers for social work, medical professionals, and advancement of the current system of legal and psychological support to survivors of gender based violence.

Activities will continue in 2017, with presenting the monitoring findings and recommendations to the targeted governmental institutions, international organizations, women's and human rights CSOs, and its promotion, with the focus on advocacy for implementation of its findings and recommendations in the practice Multi-sectoral working group at the entity level of the RS will be established, with involving representatives of the relevant ministries in the RS and women's CSOs to work on improving policies of protecting access to justice and judicial protection for women and children survivors of violence, presenting and discussing monitoring results with the targeted official institutions, CSOs, and international organizations engaged in the justice sector reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4.3 Empowering Participation of Women for Building Sustainable Peace, Security, and Gender Sensitive Policy Making

With support of the U.S. Department of State, Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, the Foundation United Women Banja Luka initiated two-year project with overall objective of diminishing gender based discrimination of women in building peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and creating environment in which women and men have equal possibilities.

The project activities are creating opportunities for women and men in legislative and executive governance and women CSO activists in BiH to collaborate through the Program Platform 2016 – 2018, work toward advancing women’s rights, increasing influence of women in peace building and stability through decision making at state, entity, and Brčko District levels. During 2016, three (3) thematic workshops were held with participation of hundred and four (104) women and men parliamentarians, representatives of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality at state, entity, and Brcko District levels, and women CSO activists throughout BiH during which key priorities and strategic actions aimed to advance women’s human rights and gender equality were defined at the targeted levels. Additional meetings were held with the parliamentary commissions for gender equality at the state and entity level, to discuss priorities and their support in advocacy actions. Women in decision making and young women politicians had the opportunity to increase knowledge on the international standards for ensuring women’s participation in peace building, decision making, and security, and increased skills in gender sensitive policy making and communication with media.



Capacity building workshop for women politicians, August 2016, Neum, BiH



Participants of the Joint Thematic Workshop on Program Platform of Cooperation of Women NGO Activists and Women Parliamentarians 2016 – 2018, Neum BiH

4.4 Coordinated Efforts – Toward New European Standards in Protection of Women from Gender Based Violence

In 2016, 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.



Regional Conference “Cooperation of the Governmental Institutions with Civil Society Organizations with the Objective of Implementation of the Istanbul Convention”, 11 May 2016, Sarajevo, BiH Parliamentary Assembly

4.5 Prevention of Gender Based Violence – Education in the Elementary Schools in Rural Areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 2016, the Foundation “United Women” Banja Luka continued work on prevention of gender based violence through education. With support of IN Foundation – Foundation for Social Inclusion and Participation of Children and Youth People in BiH, Through peer education and trainings of school teachers and educational professionals, three hundred (300) boys and girls high school students in Gradiška and Banja Luka increased awareness and knowledge on gender equality and gender based discrimination. Project activities also enabled thirty (30) school teachers and education professionals to increase awareness on gender based violence and more actively involve in prevention of gender based violence among high school students in the targeted regions.

5. 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

As contribution to the campaign of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United Women Banja Luka coordinated preparation of the joint Calendar of Activities, with contribution of twenty-four (24) grassroots women’s and human rights CSOs, media, governmental institutions, and international organizations working on prevention and combating gender based violence against women throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. The joint Calendar was distributed via social networks, web pages of contributing organizations, and to media with invitation to ensure media coverage of local actions. It was also uploaded into the International Web Calendar at the web page administrated by the CGWL. We prepared local language translation of the Toolkit for 16 Days Campaign prepared by the Center for Global Women’s Leadership (CGWL) at Rutgers University, as the global coordinating organization of the 16 Days Campaign. United Women Banja Luka distributed translated materials to all interested women’s and human rights NGOs in BiH and the region, via e-mail listserves.

As a part of the 16 Days Campaign, the United Women Banja Luka produced two (2) video clips. The first video clip the working title *“Make Peace – Do Not Tolerate Violence Against Women”*⁵ was made with contribution of fifteen (15) women and men – one with messages of the women parliamentarians, public officials, civil society activists, and women and men public persons throughout BiH sharing messages of women’s contribution in peace building, security, fighting gender based violence against women, and

⁵ Video Clip “Make Peace – Do Not Tolerate Violence Against Women”, Direct link on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7PrcGdHaWE> (last access on 26 April 2017)

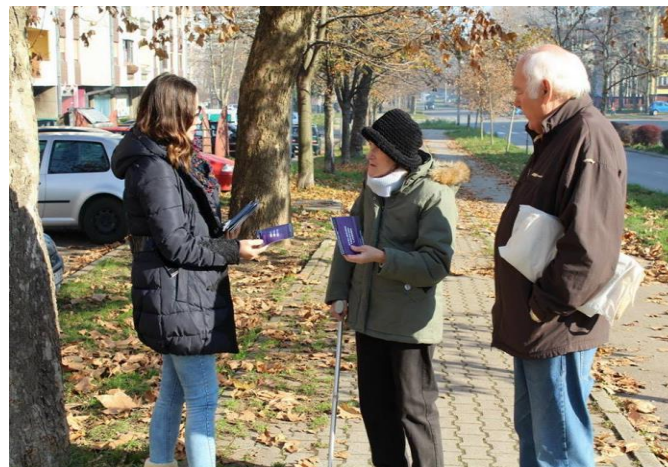
importance of women's participation in decision making, and other with messages of public persons calling for zero tolerance for violence against women. Video was publicly promoted at the Thematic Conference held on 24 November, 2016 in the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, and the advanced workshop for women politicians held from 26 to 28 November 2016, at Jahorina, and at the Regional Conference "Advancement of Gender Equality Policies in the Western Balkan and Turkey", held in Budva, Montenegro, where hundred (100) CD copies of the video clip were shared with the Conference participants.



16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence – Activities of the Foundation United Women Banja Luka

The second video clip was produced as a part of the regional campaign "I Do Not Tolerate Violence Against Women" with a focus on raising public awareness on gender based violence against women and girls and public advocacy for implementation of the international standards on prevention and combating violence against women and domestic violence integrated in the Istanbul Convention. The United Women Banja Luka implemented this Campaign together with the local partner organizations in BiH – Foundation Lara Bijeljina, Women's Association Žena BiH Mostar, Prava za Sve Sarajevo, and Citizen's Association Medica Zenica, and regional partners – Autonomous Women's Center from Belgrade (Serbia), Center for Women Rosa from Zagreb (Croatia), Gender Equality Council from Skopje (Macedonia), Women's Center from Podgorica (Montenegro), SOS Telephone for Women and Children

from Ljubljana (Slovenia), and Women Against Violence in Europe Network (WAVE) from Austria. The video was promoted through social networks and TV broadcasting stations in BiH that supported the Campaign.⁶



16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence – Activities of the Foundation United Women Banja Luka

⁶ Video Clip "I Do Not Tolerate Violence Against Women", Direct link on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B250U0uSI-8> (last access on 26 April 2017)

6. Strengthening the United Women Banja Luka Programs, Skills, and Capacities

The Foundation United Women Banja Luka received core support from TRAG Foundation from Belgrade (Serbia), in partnership with OAK Foundation for the period from 2015 to 2018. Core support enables the United Women Banja Luka continuous work on diminishing gender based discrimination and violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina and creating environment in which women and men have equal possibilities.

The Foundation United Women Banja Luka continued work within our two key program areas of prevention and combating violence against women and increasing women's political participation, as well as improving organizational capacities through skills building of staff members, establishing volunteer's program, and establishing the resource center.

Support of TRAG Foundation and OAK Foundation also enables the Foundation United Women Banja Luka to enhance networking and cooperation with women's civil society organization working in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro through participation in joint advocacy, trainings, and workshops. In 2016, United Women Banja Luka improved financial management and fundraising strategies, conducted staff supervision, improved program development, and improved the volunteers' program through capacity building and involvement of volunteers in program activities.



Volunteers of the United Women Banja Luka at the CSO Fair in Banja Luka, July 2016



Capacity Building Training on Women's Human Rights for the United Women Banja Luka volunteers



Women NGO Activists from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro at the Fundraising Training, organized by the TRAG Foundation, in partnership with OAK Foundation, 12 to 14 July 2017, Petrovac na Moru, Montenegro



The United Women Banja Luka team members at the training of writing project proposals in accordance with the EU standards, 29 February – 2 March 2016, Zlatibor, Serbia

7. Financial Overview of the Foundation United Women Banja Luka in 2016

	Donor	Project Title	Project Period	Amount EUR
1	USA Embassy Bosnia and Herzegovina	Advancing Participation of Women in Governance and Gender Sensitive Policy Making in Bosnia and Herzegovina	01/09/2015 - 31/08/2016	16,031.94
2	US Department of State/Office of Global Women's Issues	Empowering Participation of Women for Building Sustainable Peace, Security, and Gender Sensitive Policy Making	09/30/2015 – 08/30/2017	69,385.80
3	Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport of RS Government/City Administration Banja Luka, local communities	Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence Banja Luka (100% of running costs)	01/01/2016 – 31/12/2016	90,143.29
4	Autonomous Women's Center (AWC) Belgrade, Serbia/EU IPA	Coordinated Efforts – Toward New European Standards in Protection of Women from Gender Based Violence	01/12/2014 – 31/12/2016	31,976.42
5	Vive žene Tuzla/European Union	Ensuring Access to Justice for Victims/Witnesses through Strengthening Existing and Establishing New Networks of Support to Witnesses throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina	01/01/2015 - 31/12/2017	122,858, 86
6	TRAG Foundation, in partnership with OAK Foundation	Core/Institutional Support	01/09/2015 - 31/08/2018	49,528.54
7	Foundation Kvinna till Kvinna Sweden	Improving Prevention and Combating GBV	01/01/2016 - 31/12/2017	93,696.90
8	In Foundation/Kinderpostzegels Netherlands	Preventive Activities of Gender Based Violence in Schools	01/09/2016 – 31/08/2017	13,331.25
9	UK Embassy Sarajevo	Comprehensive Approach Towards Dignified Life of Survivors of War Rape and Sexual Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina	01/04/2015 -31/03/2016	19,180.27
10	Individual donations of women and men citizens, private and public companies, institutions, CSOs	Fund for Economic Empowerment of Women Survivors of Violence	Contributions in 2016	5,794.00
TOTAL:				511,927,27

8. Foundation United Women Banja Luka team in 2016

8.1 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

8.2 Professional Staff

Aleksandra Petrić, Executive Director

Jelena Jeličić, Office Coordinator

Gorica Ivić, Project Coordinator

Lana Jajčević, Legal Advisor

Zvijezdana Marković, Legal Aid Assistant

Helena Jokić, Financial Manager

8.3 Professional Staff of the Safe House Banja Luka

Amela Bašić Tomić, Coordinator

Dragana Miljević Mirković, Social Worker

Jasminka Pavić, Nurse

Jelena Šućur Kajkut, Nurse

Marieta Grbić, Nurse

Milica Smiljnić, Nurse

Gordana Vrbica, Nurse

Nada Jeličić, Housekeeper /Secretary



Banjaluca, BIH