

FROM
FORMAL
OBLIGATION

TO
ACTUAL
PROGRESS

Response to gender-based
violence against women in
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Monitoring the situation - baseline report

2019-2022



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RESPONSE TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN BOSNIA
AND HERZEGOVINA

MONITORING THE SITUATION - BASELINE REPORT
2019-2022

UNITED WOMEN FOUNDATION BANJA LUKA

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Response to gender-based violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Monitoring the situation - baseline report 2019-2022

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Introduction

Introduction

Gender-based violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains widespread, has serious and long-term effects on their welfare and security, and on the society as a whole. The laws and public policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not recognise the gender dimension of various forms of violence to which women and girls are subjected to in a way that would indicate their structural nature and focus on women just because they are women or affect women disproportionately to men. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) recognises violence against women as a “*violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*”¹ Recognising gender-based violence and its effects on women and society as a whole is of crucial importance for planning and implementing of responses of public institutions in the context of their prevention and enabling of timely, available and efficient help and support to women who survived violence in accordance with their specific needs.

The United Women Foundation in the scope of its project “Preventing and Combating Gender-based Violence in the Process of EU Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina” supported by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation from Sweden launched an initiative of continuous monitoring of the situation in preventing and combating gender-based violence against women. The monitoring aims to identify the situation, challenges and progress in this area, and to set the priorities for public advocacy and action of public institutions, civil society organisations and international organisations in the context of fulfilling the binding international standards from the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* and the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*. The report also indicates the aspects of the European Union commitments to regulate the area of gender-based violence against women, which are also relevant for Bosnia and Herzegovina in the process of accession to the European Union.

¹ The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, Council of Europe Treaty Series no. 210, Istanbul, 11 May 2011, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>

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Mandatory International Standards in
the Field of Gender Based Violence
Against Women in Bosnia and
Herzegovina

2.1 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW (1979) is a comprehensive international treaty on women's human rights defining discrimination against women in various areas of public and private life and establishing a framework for parties towards activities for the elimination of discrimination against women and establishment of gender equality. CEDAW does not regulate the area of gender-based violence against women in a direct manner. However, obligations of the parties stem from the general observations adopted by the Committee monitoring the Convention implementation. In that regard, the Committee in its Concluding observations on the sixth periodic Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013-2016)² quotes the **General Recommendation no. 35 (2017³) on gender-based violence against women, updating the General Recommendation no. 19 (1992)**. The general recommendation no. 35 instructs the state party to undertake measures directed to criminalisation and prevention of all forms of gender-based violence, protection and assistance to women who survived violence, access to court protection including compensation for violence, establishment of a system of collecting, analysing and publishing statistical data on all forms of gender-based violence, as well as establishment of international cooperation with UN agencies, international community and civil society organisations. Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee are binding for all states parties, and CEDAW is directly implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the Annexes and Constitution of BiH.

CEDAW Committee Concluding Observations (2019)⁴ urge Bosnia and Herzegovina to:

- a) Provide women who are victims or survivors of gender-based violence, including those belonging to disadvantaged groups, with adequate support and assistance, including free legal aid, access to accessible shelters, medical treatment, and psychosocial counselling, and provide financial support to civil society organisations that give assistance to such victims and survivors;

² Sixth periodic report of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (2013-2016), available at the web page of the BiH Gender Equality Agency, at: https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/170823_VI-periodicni-CEDAW-lzvjestaj-za-BiH_Nacrt.pdf

³ General recommendation no. 35 on gender-based violence against women, update of the general recommendation no. 19, Committee for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW/C/GC35, 14 July 2017. Available at the web page of the Autonomous Women's Centre at: https://www.womenngo.org.rs/images/CEDAW/Opsta_preporuka_35_scedaw_srb.pdf

⁴ Concluding comments of the CEDAW Committee for BiH (2019), point 26 a-e, available at the web page of the Gender Equality Agency at: https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BOS_CEDAW-C-BiH-Concluding-Observations-6_AsAdopted.pdf

- b) Allocate adequate funding to civil society organisations that operate hotlines for victims and survivors of domestic violence to ensure that they operate around the clock, seven days a week, and are confidential and accessible by women throughout the State party;
- c) Assess the impact of the capacity-building provided to the judiciary, the police and other law enforcement officers, as well as relevant service providers, on the strict application of legislation criminalising all forms of gender-based violence against women and on gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods;
- d) Ensure that all forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence, are duly investigated and prosecuted, that perpetrators are adequately punished and that victims have access to appropriate redress, including compensation;
- e) Establish a uniform data collection system on all forms of gender-based violence in the State party, disaggregated by age, ethnicity, disability, type of violence and relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

2.2 The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)

The Istanbul Convention (2011) establishes the binding standards in preventing and combating gender-based violence against women through four main pillars - ***prevention, protection, prosecution and coordinated policies***. The GREVIO expert group monitors the implementation of the Convention by monitoring the activities of the states parties at the national level through their periodic reporting, visits and consultations with representatives of governmental institutions at all levels, and through analysing the data submitted by interested non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations within alternative reports and consultations during visits. Recommendations of the GREVIO expert group given to the states parties are binding and directed on the improvement of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the states parties.

BiH submitted its first report (2020)⁵ on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, and after the conducted fourth evaluation procedure, GREVIO adopted the **report with recommendations (2022)**⁶ which are binding. GREVIO's recommendations to Bosnia and Herzegovina focus on all the areas covered by the Istanbul Convention, as follows: purpose, definitions, equality and non-discrimination, general obligations, integrated policies and data collection, prevention, protection and support, substantive law, investigations, prosecution, procedural law and protection measures, migration and asylum. In addition, the **Committee of the Parties of the Istanbul Convention** adopted **Recommendations for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in BiH (IC-CP/Inf(2022)7)** focusing on the key areas, and urged Bosnia and Herzegovina to submit its progress report by 4 December 2025.⁷

2.3 Activities and standards of the European Union

The **European Union (EU)** adopted the **Action Plan for gender equality and women's empowerment in external action for the period 2021-2025 (GAP III) (2020)**⁸ that is a policy of priorities and EU roadmap in the context of increasing the European Union's contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG) - gender equality in all internal and external areas of policies throughout the 2030 Agenda. **GAP III establishes six key thematic priorities, including ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence. Based on commitments within GAP III, the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina created the Gender Profile in BiH⁹ and GAP III Country-level Implementation Plan (CLIP BiH).**

CLIP BiH sets specific priorities that need to be achieved through dialogue and actions, as follows:

- Harmonisation of legislation in country and with the Istanbul Convention and effective implementation of legislation related to the prevention of gender-based violence, in particular, domestic violence;

⁵ Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina to GREVIO on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, 6 February 2020. Available (in English) at: <https://rm.coe.int/grevioinf-2020-12/pdfa/16809eed4a>

⁶ GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Bosnia and Herzegovina, 8 November 2022. Available (in English) at: <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-baseline-evaluation-report-on-bosnia-and-herzegovina/1680a8e5f1>

⁷ Committee of the Parties Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), Recommendation on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence by Bosnia and Herzegovina IC-CP/Inf(2022)7. Adopted on 6 December 2022, published on 12 December 2022 Available (in English) at: <https://rm.coe.int/ic-cp-inf-2022-7-cop-recommendation-bosnia-herzegovina-eng/1680a952ab>

⁸ Gender Action Plan III – a Priority of EU External Action, Available (in English) at: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf

⁹ https://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/delegacijaEU_2014070314432045eng.pdf

Opinion of the European Commission (EC) on Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership application (2019)¹⁰ specifies that Bosnia and Herzegovina will have to thoroughly improve its legislation and institutional framework in order to fulfil the 14 key priorities, including in the field of fundamental rights the strengthening of the protection of rights of all citizens, notably by ensuring the implementation of the legislation on non-discrimination and on gender equality (priority no. 9).

- Establishment of departments specialised for GBV response in police and public sector and embedding of training for professionals in GBV response;
- Harmonisation of legislation and its effective implementation in provision of health care, social protection, legal aid and other services to GBV survivors in all their diversity;
- Effective and harmonised implementation of public funding for shelters.

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The European Commission annual reports for Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of the process of accession to the European Union persistently emphasise the problems in addressing gender-based violence as an issue of the protection of fundamental rights. The latest report (2022) underlines that *the institutional response to gender-based violence needs to be improved, including on protective measures, victim support, legal aid and safe accommodation. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to accelerate the prosecution of crimes of sexual violence, provide reparation to women victims of war crimes, and secure witness*

¹⁰ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Commission Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's Application for Membership of the European Union, Brussels, 29 May 2019. Available (in English) at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2019-05/20190529-bosnia-and-herzegovina-opinion.pdf>

protection. The report also points out that *data collection needs to be improved to enable the development of sound policies targeting key gender gaps, and provide relevant data on gender-based violence.*¹¹

In the context of the **European Union *acquis***, significant is the ***Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, support, and protection of victims of crime.***¹² The Directive ensures that victims of crime receive appropriate information, support and protection and are able to participate in criminal proceedings. Victims of gender-based violence, violence in intimate partner relationships, sexual violence, exploitation or hate crime, and victims with disabilities, are, among other things, specified as victims whose specific protection needs are defined through individual assessments. The Directive on the rights of victims pays special attention to the provision of information and support from the first contact with competent authorities, as well as training of professionals in public institutions and coordination of services working with victims.

On International Women's Day, 8 March 2022, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a ***Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence (COM(2022) 105 final).*** The Proposal for the Directive lays down minimum rules in relation to the definition of criminal offences and sanctions in the area of sexual exploitation of women and children and computer violence, rights of victims of all forms of violence against women and domestic violence before, during or after criminal proceedings, and protection and support to victims.¹³

¹¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022 Report, European Commission, Brussels, 12 October 2022, page 34. Available (in English) at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/bosnia-and-herzegovina-report-2022_en

¹² Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA. Available (in Croatian) at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32012L0029&from=HR>

¹³ Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence (COM(2022) 105 final). Available (in Croatian) at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0105>

The main goal of monitoring the progress in preventing and combating gender-based violence against women and girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina is mapping the situation and defining the recommendations for action towards the implementation of binding international standards for BiH in this area from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), by addressing the following key areas:

- _ Framework laws and public policies;
- _ Data collection on gender-based violence against women and girls;
- _ Prevention of gender-based violence (including awareness raising and training of professionals);
- _ Access to general support services for women survivors of gender-based violence;
- _ Provision of specialised support and assistance services for women survivors of gender-based violence (including the support from public budgets to civil society organisations providing support to women who survived violence);
- _ Institutional coordination mechanisms and cooperation with civil society organisations in the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence;
- _ Specialised services for women who survived other forms of gender-based violence (sexual violence);
- _ Protection and support during emergency situations, including the response to the Covid-19 pandemic;

The monitoring report covers the period 2019-2021 and was prepared based on the data collected by monitoring the operations of governmental institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the state, entity and Brčko District level through desk research, data collection via surveys, interviewing of relevant persons, as well as the data and research conducted by civil society organisations active in preventing and combating gender-based violence against women and girls, with the focus on the organisations providing specialised support and assistance services to survivors through safe houses and other forms of support.

In addition to the data from governmental institutions, the report also presents and analyses alternative data collected from civil society organisations providing specialised support and assistance to women who survived violence, and indicates the key findings and recommendations towards the fulfilment of international standards and obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its public institutions towards preventing and combating gender-based violence.

4

Findings of the Monitoring and
Recommendations for Action in
Preventing and Combating Gender
Based Violence in Bosnia and
Herzegovina

4.1 Monitoring Findings

Bosnia and Herzegovina failed to ensure the harmonisation of laws and public policies within BiH in the field of gender-based violence against women, and failed to ensure their compliance with international standards. Laws in this area are almost fully gender neutral. Protection from different forms of gender-based violence is legally guaranteed throughout the country, whereby women subjected to violence are placed in an unequal position and do not have equal access to protection and justice provided by law.

Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a national strategy that focuses exclusively on preventing and combating gender-based violence, including domestic violence. Preventing and combating violence based on sex, including domestic violence, remains one of the priority areas of the Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2018-2022 within the Strategic Objective 1: Creation, implementation and monitoring the programme of measures for improving gender equality in governmental institutions, by priority areas. The proposed measures do not focus on amendments of the legislative framework and public policies, collection and publication of data and research on gender-based violence, activities focusing on preventing and combating violence, educational programmes for professionals. Entity public policies specifically refer to domestic violence and do not cover other forms of gender-based violence. The Brčko District BiH does not have a strategic document that regulates the area of gender-based violence, including domestic violence.

Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have an established common database on all forms of gender-based violence at the state level. A lack of a clear methodology as well as the legal, administrative and

Bosnia and Herzegovina failed to ensure the harmonisation of laws and public policies within BiH in the field of gender-based violence against women, and failed to ensure their compliance with international standards.

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Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have an established common database on all forms of gender-based violence at the state level.

Public institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have a continuous systemic approach to the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence.

Public institutions in BiH do not have a uniform institutional approach to the training of professionals in preventing and combating gender-based violence.

political obstacles for establishing a uniform system for data collection and analysis has been observed. Collecting data on various forms of gender-based violence by public institutions acting through the prosecution of cases of violence and provision of support and assistance to victims of violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains incomplete and inconsistent. Various public institutions use their methodology and forms to collect data on cases of violence, which disables consistent monitoring of the situation and reaction of institutions in response to gender-based violence.

Public institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have a continuous systemic approach to the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence. Even though there is continuity in conducting awareness raising campaigns about the forms and impact of gender-based violence as well as available mechanisms of support and assistance for women subjected to violence, the campaigns are primarily tied to the periods marking international dates in the field of women's human rights, gender equality and gender-based violence (8 March, International Women's Day, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence), within projects supported by international donations.

Public institutions in BiH do not have a uniform institutional approach to the training of professionals in preventing and combating gender-based violence. There are no regulations that make such training obligatory for all law enforcement officers (judiciary, police) and for providers of general support services, that is, institutions recognised as protection services from all forms of gender-based violence. **Examples of good practice in the implementation of institutionally integrated training of professionals in the system of protection from violence** were observed through monitoring - Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska and Ministry of Health of the Federation of BiH.

However, another thing also observed was the lack of structured impact assessment by the competent ministries, with clear indicators of progress.

Bosnia and Herzegovina did not stipulate legal obligations of all officers implementing the laws and of professionals who provide general support services to inform the women who survived various forms of gender-based violence in a manner understandable to them, about the rights and services available within the protection services.

Institutions in BiH apply different models of financing the housing of victims of domestic violence in safe houses, while specialised services provided by women's non-governmental organisations to victims of violence who are not accommodated in safe houses are provided on the basis of support of international donors, including the support to women victims of other forms of gender-based violence.

Bosnia and Herzegovina launched activities to establish support services for victims of sexual violence by launching an initiative to set up pilot crisis centres for victims of rape and sexual violence in three medical institutions in the Federation of BiH. No similar activities were carried out in the Republika Srpska or Brčko District BiH. There is a lack of clear institutional reference mechanisms, availability of services throughout the BiH territory and trained staff for working with victims of sexual violence with public institutions recognised

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Institutional mechanisms of coordination and cooperation in preventing and combating gender-based violence are established at the entity, cantonal and local level, and primarily focus on the prevention and combating domestic violence.

The cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organisations in the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence is based on protocols and cooperation agreements.

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted numerous challenges in achieving protection and support for women victims of gender-based violence.

as protection services and providing general support services, that are able to provide support based on needs including timely forensic tests, response to trauma and psychological counselling. Non-governmental organisations providing specialised assistance and support services to victims of violence need additional financial and human resources, and training for the existing staff and models of good practice in providing support to survivors of sexual violence, as well as better cooperation with public institutions in preventing and combating sexual violence.

Institutional mechanisms of coordination and cooperation in preventing and combating gender-based violence are established at the entity, cantonal and local level, and primarily focus on the prevention and combating domestic violence. Coordination mechanisms are established at the state level with partial participation of representatives of governmental institutions at the entity level. Thanks to this, there is a lack of a uniform systemic approach to response to gender-based violence, particularly in the context of the development of public policies that would address harmonised data collection, harmonisation of laws and application of international standards in preventing and combating gender-based violence.

The cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organisations in the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence is based on protocols and cooperation agreements enabling cooperation between the providers of general and specialised support and assistance services to victims of violence and improvement of referral mechanisms at the local level. However, **the participation of female**

representatives of non-governmental organisations in counselling, boards or committees (in which, upon rule, there is only one NGO female representative taking part) **is limited**, as is the **participation/contribution of non-governmental organisations having long-term direct experience in working with women and children victims of gender-based violence throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina in the processes of adopting measures and drafting/amending laws in the fields with a direct impact on the protection of women and children victims of various forms of gender-based violence.**

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted numerous challenges in achieving protection and support for women victims of gender-based violence. The measures adopted by crisis management committees in BiH from the declaration of emergency situation **were not gender sensitive, did not ensure efficient protection or support adapted to the needs of women subjected to violence, or were adopted with a delay**, causing difficulties in working with women and children in the state of need.

4.2 Recommendations for Action:

Laws and Public Policies

- The Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina recognises gender-based violence against women in line with the definition of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Recognise gender-based violence against women as a form of discrimination against women. Define gender-based violence in the context of socially construed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society considers appropriate for women and men (Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention);
- Ensure the harmonisation of laws on the protection from domestic violence of the Republika Srpska, Federation of BiH, Brčko District BiH with standards of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, by removing the provisions recognising domestic violence as a misdemeanour, by recognising the right of victims of domestic violence to information and other forms of general and specialised support, by ensuring efficient mechanisms of protection and support to victims of violence through the application of urgent and protective measures and ensuring clear mechanisms of financing specialised support services through public budgets;

- Define the notion of a victim of criminal offence in the criminal codes of the Republika Srpska, Federation of BiH and Brčko District BiH and the victim's right to support and protection in criminal proceedings, in accordance with international standards (Istanbul Convention and EU Directive on the rights of victims);
- Define gender-based murder of a woman (femicide) as a specific crime or a qualified form of crime of aggravated murder, and also recognise the criminal offences regulated by the Istanbul Convention in the criminal codes of the Republika Srpska, Federation of BiH and Brčko District BiH;
- Adopt a national policy to encompass all forms of gender-based violence, with clear measures, time frame of implementation and progress indicators, as a separate document or as part of the Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Ensure coordination mechanisms for the implementation of policy measures with institutions of the Republika Srpska, Federation of BiH and Brčko District BiH, as well as mechanisms for continuous monitoring of implementation by progress indicators and transparent reporting;
- Adopt the policies that will include all forms of gender-based violence at the level of the Republika Srpska, Federation of BiH and Brčko District BiH, with clear measures, time frame of implementation and progress indicators; Ensure coordination mechanisms between the competent public institutions in the implementation of policy measures, as well as mechanisms of continuous monitoring by progress indicators and transparent reporting.;

Collecting Data on Gender Based Violence Against Women

- Establish a framework methodology at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the purpose of systemic collection and disaggregation of comparable official data on all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and gender-based femicide in BiH, taking account of the main parameters recommended by the CEDAW Committee (age, ethnicity, disability, type of violence and relationship between the perpetrator and the victim) and make the data collected publicly available on a regular basis;
- Harmonise and/or establish (where missing) methodologies and systems of collection of comparable official data by public institutions officially coming into contact with victims and perpetrators, for the purposes of systemic collection and disaggregation of official data on all forms of gender-based

violence, including domestic violence and gender-based femicide in the Republika Srpska, Federation of BiH and Brčko District BiH, taking account of the main parameters recommended by the CEDAW Committee (age, ethnicity, disability, type of violence and relationship between the perpetrator and the victim) and make the data collected publicly available on a regular basis;

- Support non-governmental organisations providing specialised support and assistance services to women and children survivors of violence to improve the collection and disaggregation of alternative data on cases of gender-based violence reported through the provision of specialised services, and provided support and assistance to victims of violence, in order to improve the response based on the needs of victims and protection of their human rights guaranteed by laws and binding international standards;

Preventing Gender Based Violence and Training of Professionals

- Design and regularly implement at institutional levels awareness raising campaigns and activities on the nature and all forms of gender-based violence, as well as their effects on the victims of violence, including addressing the deeply rooted stereotypes and discrimination against women, making sure that the campaigns and activities recognise and include the nature and effects of violence to which multiple marginalised groups of women are subjected (Roma women, rural women, women with disabilities, elderly women, LGBTIQ+ women, etc.). Involve non-governmental organisations, the private sector and media in the campaigns and activities;
- Make sure that the public institutions responsible for the improvement of gender equality regularly carry out research and studies on the prevalence of all forms of gender-based violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the participation of non-governmental organisations active in preventing and combating violence, for the purpose of planning and carrying out activities focusing on fighting the deeply rooted gender-based stereotypes and discrimination against women that recognise the needs of women subjected to all forms of violence, including multiple marginalised groups of women;
- Regulate the duty to attend regular training on all forms of gender-based violence and gender sensitive approach to working with survivors for all professionals in the protection system who come into contact with victims and perpetrators in providing general support services and interventions related to the cases of gender-based violence. Regularly plan the financial resources for the implementation of all training in public budgets of responsible institutions monitoring/managing the work of GBV

protection services. Involve in training/conduct training in cooperation with women's non-governmental organisations having long-term experience in providing specialised assistance and support to victims of gender-based violence. Regularly conduct an assessment of impact of training of professionals based on clearly measurable progress indicators;

Access to General Support Services for Survivors of Gender Based Violence

- Stipulate an obligation of all officers implementing the laws and of professionals providing general support services to inform the women who survived various forms of gender-based violence in a manner understandable to them, about the rights and services available within the protection services;
- Enable access to women who survived some form of gender-based violence to free legal aid and rights in the field of social protection and health care, without discrimination on any basis, applying the principle based on the protection of human rights and needs of victims of violence;

Specialised Services of Support and Assistance for Survivors of Gender Based Violence

- Ensure sustainable and sufficient financing of women's organisations providing specialised support and assistance services to survivors of all forms of gender-based violence from public budgets, through transparent and accountable public procedures at all levels (state, entity, cantonal, municipal) for all specialised services, including safe houses, SOS hotline, free legal and psychosocial support and economic empowerment of women through sustainable exit strategies;

Specialised Services for Women Survivors of Other Forms of Gender Based Violence (Sexual Violence)

- Establish a sufficient number of crisis management centres for victims of rape or referral centres for victims of sexual violence providing urgent medical care, support in overcoming trauma, forensic tests/sample taking, psychological counselling, legal aid by trained professionals throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Establish efficient referral mechanisms for survivors in order to ensure long-term assistance and support in accordance with their needs, through cooperation with public institutions providing general support services and women's organisations providing specialised support and assistance services;

- Provide financial support for the establishment and sustainability of services for victims of sexual violence through funding from public budgets, examine specific needs for establishing support and assistance services for victims of sexual violence, and provide continuous learning from models of good practice from other countries having established and developed services for victims of sexual violence;

Institutional Coordination Mechanisms and Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations

- Provide efficient coordination mechanisms of public institutions that have in their mandate activities focusing on preventing and combating all forms of gender-based violence, at all levels of government and management, for the purpose of a uniform systemic response to all forms of gender-based violence, by preventing violence, protecting the victims and prosecuting the perpetrators;
- Establish mechanisms and space at all levels of government and management for continuous consultative dialogue with women's organisations providing specialised support and assistance services to women who survived gender-based violence, so that their opinions and experience can be integrated into the public policies focusing on the prevention and combat against all forms of gender-based violence against women;

Protection and Support during Emergency Situations, Including the Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

- Establish gender sensitive systemic protection and support measures during emergency situations at entity, cantonal and municipal levels that will integrate the needs of women subjected to all forms of gender-based violence, including multiple marginalised groups of women (Roma women, rural women, women with disabilities, elderly women, LGBTIQ+ women, etc.) These measures should focus on the availability of general support services in public institutions, as well as intervention financial resources for unobstructed operations of women's organisations providing specialised support and assistance services to survivors of all forms of gender-based violence;
- Ensure that mandatory training of professionals and functioning of referral mechanisms address the specificities of support and assistance to survivors of all forms of gender-based violence during emergency situations, including support to multiple marginalised groups of women.

5

Analysis by Areas

5.1 Framework Laws and Public Policies in Preventing and Combating Gender Based Violence

5.1.1 Laws

Bosnia and Herzegovina **failed to ensure the harmonisation of laws and public policies within BiH in the field of gender-based violence against women**, and failed to ensure their compliance with international standards. Laws in this area are almost fully gender neutral. For instance, they do not recognise that women and children are the most common victims of domestic violence, nor do they recognise the structural nature of violence against women as gender-based violence. The definition of violence on the basis of gender exists in the Law on Gender Equality of BiH, but is gender neutral.¹⁴

The Committee of Parties of the Istanbul Convention urges Bosnia and Herzegovina to “enhance the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in relation to all forms of violence against women, beyond domestic violence, which are currently less addressed by policies, programmes and support services with due regard to their gendered nature (paragraph 12); ensure that the legislation and policies recognise that violence against women is a form of discrimination against women (paragraph 13) and to align more closely to the Istanbul Convention the definitions of domestic violence and gender-based violence in use, as well as to harmonise the legal definitions of domestic violence across all areas of law (paragraph 14).¹⁵

The current situation indicates that the **protection from different forms of gender-based violence is not legally guaranteed throughout the country, whereby women subjected to violence are placed in an unequal position and do not have equal access to protection and justice provided by law.**

¹⁴ Article 6, para 2 of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH defines gender-based violence as “any act causing physical, mental, sexual or economic damage or suffering, as well as threats of such actions, which interfere with the enjoyment of rights and freedoms based on gender equality, in public and private life.” The Law on Law on Gender Equality of BiH, consolidated text, Official Gazette BiH, 102/09

¹⁵ Recommendation 1 in relation to paragraphs 12, 13, 14 of the Committee of the Parties 67 on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul Convention IC-CP/Inf(2022)7, adopted on 6 December 2022, published on 12 December 2022

The *Criminal Code of the Republika Srpska* recognises offences of gender-based violence regulated by the Istanbul Convention¹⁶ while the governmental institutions in the Federation of BiH launched activities focusing on the alignment of the *Criminal Code of the Federation of BiH* with international standards.¹⁷ The criminal codes of the Federation of BiH, Republika Srpska and Brčko District BiH recognise the institute of a criminal offence committed out of hatred, but incitement to violence and hatred based on sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited only by the Criminal Code of the Republika Srpska. The valid criminal legislation (criminal procedure codes and criminal codes) does not recognise the notion of the “victim” but only an “injured party” of a criminal offence, nor does it recognise gender-based femicide. The criminal procedure codes of the Republika Srpska and Federation of BiH use the notion of the victim in two articles¹⁸ but do not define it in the context of a criminal proceeding, meaning there is no clear commitment of institutions to the need and manner of protecting their rights. The Criminal Code of the Brčko District¹⁹ does not recognise the criminal offences regulated by the Istanbul Convention.

The implementation of entity laws on protection from domestic violence only partially ensures the protection of women and children subjected to violence. The Brčko District BiH, as a separate unit within BiH still has double regulation of domestic violence, and for some of its forms stipulates misdemeanour punishments, which in practice leads to lenient punishments for perpetrators of violence.

By coming into force of the *Law on Amendments to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in the Republika Srpska (May 2020)*, the approach to the protection of victims of violence was significantly improved in the legal sense. However, it has been observed in practice that courts took a stance that it is not possible to apply this Law and hand down protective measures to perpetrators of domestic violence in

¹⁶ The Criminal Code of the Republika Srpska recognised the following criminal offences with its 2017 amendments: female genital mutilation, forced sterilisation, sexual extortion, sexual harassment, stalking, forced marriage and forced abortion. CCRS, Official Gazette RS, 64/2017, 104/2018 - decision of the Constitutional Court, 15/2021, 89/2021

¹⁷ Draft Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Federation of BiH was adopted by both houses of the Parliament of the Federation of BiH and submitted for public debate in July 2022. The draft foresees the introduction of the following criminal offences regulated by the Istanbul Convention: female genital mutilation, forced sterilisation, stalking, psychological violence, sexual harassment, forced marriage and forced abortion.

¹⁸ Article 221, para 2 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republika Srpska stipulates that “Medical workers, teachers, pedagogues, parents, foster parents, adoptive parents and other persons authorised or obliged to provide protection and assistance to minors, to supervise, educate and raise the minors, are obliged to immediately inform the authorised official or the prosecutor about their suspicion that the minor is the victim of sexual, physical or any other form of abuse.” Furthermore, Article 279, para 3 - Special Evidentiary Rules when dealing with Cases of Sex Crimes - stipulates that “In the case of the criminal offence against humanity and international humanitarian law, the consent of the victim shall not be used in favour of the defendant.” The same provisions are contained in the Criminal Procedure Code of the Federation of BiH in Article 228, item 2 and Article 279, item 3.

¹⁹ Criminal Code of the Brčko District BiH, Official Gazette BDBiH, 19/2020 - consolidated text. Available at: <https://advokat-prnjavorac.com/zakoni/Krivicni-zakon-Brcko-Distrikta-BiH.pdf>

misdemeanour proceedings. The rationales of court decisions dismissing the pronouncement of protective measures specify that they can only be pronounced in accordance with provisions of the Law on Misdemeanours of the Republika Srpska which, among other things, imposes the rules of launching misdemeanour proceedings, evidence and pronouncement of misdemeanour sanctions, as well as the rules ensuring the rights of the injured party (victim of domestic violence), and the perpetrator (perpetrator of violence), even though the purpose of the protective measures is not sanctions against the perpetrator of violence but only the protection of the victims of violence. Courts in the Republika Srpska say and other services for protection from domestic violence having the legal powers to seek protective measures from domestic violence accept the stance that it is not possible to apply the provision on protective measures because neither the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Republika Srpska nor the Law on Misdemeanours of the Republika Srpska prescribes a procedure to launch proceedings for such measures, therefore, a procedure for pronouncing them in a misdemeanour proceeding for an offence not regulated as a misdemeanour. This situation in practice causes harmful consequences suffered by victims of domestic violence, since protective measures are less often imposed, and these victims are left without access to the necessary protection and security against the repetition of violence.

According to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Republika Srpska, persons who were or are still in an emotional and intimate relationship with each other, regardless of whether they live or have lived in the same household, are considered family members.²⁰ Such a provision does not exist in the laws on protection from domestic violence of the Federation of BiH and Brčko District BiH, which indicates that violence committed in a same-sex relationship is not treated as domestic violence.

Draft of the new Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Federation of BiH was adopted by the House of Representatives of the Federation of BiH in July 2022. The law was proposed with the aim of harmonising the legislative framework and policies with all international standards on the elimination of violence against women.²¹ The proposed amendments are aimed at enabling access to rights and protection for survivors, as well as improving the systemic financing of safe houses as specialised support and assistance services for survivors in the Federation of BiH.

²⁰ Article 9, para z of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Republika Srpska, Official Gazette RS, 102/2012, 108/2013, 82/2015, 84/2019

²¹ The draft law was prepared by the network of non-governmental organisations BiH Safe Network, with the support of an expert working group. Draft and information in the context of the adoption of the Law available on the website of the FBiH Parliament: <https://parlamentfbih.gov.ba/v2/bs/propis.php?id=910>

5.1.2 Public Policies

Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a national strategy that focuses exclusively on preventing and combating gender-based violence, including domestic violence. With the expiration of the *Framework Strategy for the implementation of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence of BiH for the period 2015-2018*²², preventing and combating violence based on sex, including domestic violence, remains one of the priority areas of the *Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2018-2022*²³ within the Strategic Objective 1: *Creation, implementation and monitoring the programme of measures for improving gender equality in governmental institutions, by priority areas*. The proposed measures focus on amendments of the legislative framework and public policies, collection and publication of data and research on gender-based violence, activities focusing on preventing and combating violence, educational programmes for professionals.

The planned measures are not aimed at specific forms of gender-based violence, nor do they specifically target marginalised groups of women, such as Roma women, rural women, women with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons, elderly women, etc. The preparation of the BiH Gender Action Plan for the period 2023-2027 is underway. The BiH Gender Equality Agency coordinates the activities of the *Board for Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention and Femicide*,²⁴ which was formed in 2019 by the BiH Council of Ministers, upon the proposal of the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees. A representative of a civil society organisation participates in the work of the Committee on behalf of the BiH Safe Network.

The Strategy for preventing and combating domestic violence of the Republika Srpska 2020-2024²⁵ defines five strategic objectives, as follows: prevention of domestic violence, support and assistance to victims of domestic violence, monitoring of the implementation of laws, policies and measures against

²² Framework Strategy for the implementation of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence of BiH for the period 2015-2018 https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CAHVIO_Strategija.pdf

²³ Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2018-2022, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, BiH Gender Equality Agency, October 2018. Available at: https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GAP-BiH-2018-2022_B.pdf

²⁴ Decision on the establishment of the Board for Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention and Femicide in BiH, Official Gazette BiH, 60/19. Available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.ba/page/akt/YI3YnEDc8FA=>

²⁵ Available at the web site of the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republika Srpska

domestic violence and protection from domestic violence in emergency/crisis situations. The adoption of the **Strategy for preventing and combating domestic violence of the Federation of BiH 2022-2027** is in progress and the document is not publicly available.

Entity public policies specifically refer to domestic violence and **do not cover other forms of gender-based violence**. The Brčko District BiH **does not have a strategic document** that regulates the area of gender-based violence, including domestic violence.

5.2 Collecting Data on Gender Based Violence Against Women and Girls

5.2.1 Official Statistics and Research on Gender Based Violence

Bosnia and Herzegovina **does not have an established common database on all forms of gender-based violence at the state level**. A lack of a clear methodology as well as the legal, administrative and political obstacles for establishing a uniform system for data collection and analysis has been observed. Collecting data on various forms of gender-based violence by public institutions acting through the prosecution of cases of violence and provision of support and assistance to victims of violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains incomplete and inconsistent. Various public institutions use their methodology and forms to collect data on cases of violence, which disables consistent monitoring of the situation and reaction of institutions in response to gender-based violence.

The data is only partially published in statistical bulletins or periodic reports and is mainly used for reporting on the implementation of strategies and action plans in the field of gender equality, as well as for reporting to international bodies that monitor the implementation of international standards/obligations (CEDAW Committee, GREVIO expert group).

Data is mainly collected for offences of domestic violence and sexual violence and primarily include the sex, age and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Data on the ethnicity and disability of the victim and the perpetrator is collected sporadically, although the *CEDAW Committee in its Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2019) recommended Bosnia and Herzegovina to “establish a uniform data*

collection system on all forms of gender-based violence in the State party, disaggregated by age, ethnicity, disability, type of violence and relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.”²⁶

Data on ethnicity and disability is important in the context of monitoring cases of gender-based violence against multiple marginalised groups of women who remain invisible in public policies and activities to prevent and combat gender-based violence. The lack of records and comparable statistical data on all forms of gender-based violence indicates that **public institutions in BiH do not have a broader understanding of the nature and forms of gender-based violence.** The **Istanbul Convention** also gives importance to data collection and requires the Parties to *“collect disaggregated relevant statistical data at regular intervals on cases of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, support research in the field of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention in order to study its root causes and effects, incidences and conviction rates, as well as the efficacy of measures taken to implement this Convention, conduct population-based surveys at regular intervals to assess the prevalence of and trends in all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention... and ensure that the information collected pursuant to this article is available to the public.”²⁷*

In addition, a **recommendation of the Committee of the Parties of the Istanbul Convention to Bosnia and Herzegovina** is to *“ensure the collection of systematic and comparable data from all relevant administrative sources, disaggregated by all relevant categories, ensuring in particular that such coordinated and comparable data is collected by all actors in criminal proceedings in order to allow that cases are monitored along the criminal justice chain and that the staff working in these administrations are trained about the importance of submitting the required data to those charged with the task of collecting it and analysing it (paragraph 67)...”²⁸*

Public institutions continuously conduct research and analyses that are of importance for preventing and combating gender-based violence, but the documents with data, findings and recommendations for action are only partially available.

²⁶ Point 26a, Concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee on the sixth periodic report of BiH (2019). Available at: https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BOS_CEDAW-C-BIH-Concluding-Observations-6_AsAdopted.pdf

²⁷ Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention – Data collection and research

²⁸ Part of recommendation 6 in relation to paragraph 67 of the Committee of the Parties of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul Convention IC-CP/Inf(2022)7, adopted on 6 December 2022, published on 12 December 2022

5.2.2 BiH Level

Limited official data published in the last publicly available statistical bulletin "**Women and Men in Bosnia and Herzegovina**" (2022) indicates the number of men and women who were reported, accused and convicted of domestic violence and crimes against sexual freedom and morality/sexual integrity. This data is disaggregated by sex and age groups of perpetrators and victims. Official data also identifies 55 cases of femicide in the period 2016-2020, however no data is shown on gender-based femicide. The data presented in the statistical bulletin was collected from the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of BiH, FBiH Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska, Ministry of the Interior of the Brčko District BiH.²⁹ In response to the inquiry, the **Gender Equality Agency of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina** states that it has no data on cases of domestic violence, sexual violence or other forms of gender-based violence for the period 2019-2021, and that the latest data collected for the period 2017-2018 was presented in the *Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina on legislative and other measures for the implementation of the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, which was sent to the GREVIO expert group.³⁰ In the period 2019-2021, the Gender Equality Agency conducted an Analysis of Femicide Cases in BiH, which is in the process of publication and will be available to the public in 2022. In response to the inquiry, the Agency clarifies that the challenges and difficulties in data collection and processing are the lack of a clear methodology, as well as legal, administrative and political obstacles to the establishment of a uniform system for data collection and analysis.

Republika Srpska

The Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republika Srpska twice a year collects and partially publishes³¹ data on cases of domestic violence from public institutions that are recognised as services of protection against domestic violence (police, prosecutor's offices, courts, centres for social work, health and educational institutions). The data is collected, processed and published according to the *Rulebook*

²⁹ Thematic bulletin "Women and Men in BiH", Agency for Statistics of BiH, Sarajevo, 2022, pages 90 – 97. Available at: https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2022/FAM_00_2021_TB_1_BS.pdf

³⁰ The report is available at the web page of the BiH Gender Equality Agency at: <https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/200206-GREVIO-BHS.pdf>

³¹ For the observed period 2019 -2021 on the Ministry's web page the data for July-December 2020 is missing.

that regulates the content of records and reports on domestic violence.³² The data on cases of domestic violence is collected by sex, age, disability and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, while data by ethnicity is not collected.

For the purposes of monitoring the situation in the period **2019-2021**, data was collected from the **Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska (MoI RS)** on registered cases of gender-based violence based on criminal offences.³³

For the criminal offences of **murder (Art. 124 CCRS), aggravated murder (Art. 125 CCRS), cases of murder after which the perpetrator commits suicide, as well as violence in the family or family union (Art. 190 CCRS) with fatal consequences involving women identified as victims** - in **2019, five cases** were registered (1 case of murder, 3 cases in which the perpetrator committed suicide and 1 case of domestic violence with fatal consequences), in **2020, three cases** were reported/registered (1 case of aggravated murder, 1 case of murder and 1 case in which the perpetrator committed suicide), while in **2021, four cases** were reported/registered (2 aggravated murders and 2 cases after which the perpetrator committed suicide). All the victims were women and the perpetrators men. *MoI RS maintains data for these criminal offences classified by age, disability, ethnicity and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.* No cases were registered in which the female victim had a disability or was a member of national minorities. Regarding the relationship between the female victim and the perpetrator, in 2019, two women were killed by their husbands, 2 women by intimate partners, and 1 woman was killed by her father-in-law. In 2020, one woman was killed by an extramarital partner, 1 woman was killed by her intimate partner, and 1 woman was killed by her husband. In 2021, two women were killed by their husbands, 1 woman was killed by her ex-husband, while 1 woman was killed by a neighbour.

For the criminal offence of **stalking (Art. 144 CCRS)**, MoI RS registered **139 cases** in the observed period - **49 cases in 2019, 57 cases in 2020, and 22 cases in 2021**. The data is disaggregated by gender of the victim and the perpetrator for 2020 (58 victims – 38 women and 20 men, 54 perpetrators – 46 men and 8 women) and in 2021 (36 victims – 26 women and 11 men and 29 perpetrators – 25 men and 4 women). The data is not disaggregated by age, ethnicity, disability or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

³² Rulebook on the content of records and reports on domestic violence, Official Gazette RS, 58/21. Available on the web site of the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republika Srpska.

³³ MoI RS's reply to the questionnaire submitted by the United Women Foundation in 2022.

For the criminal offence of **rape (Art. 165 CCRS)**, MoI RS registered **14 cases** in the observed period (**4 cases in 2019, 5 cases in 2020, and 5 cases in 2021**). All the victims were women, with the data disaggregated by the age of the victim and the perpetrator, but not by ethnicity, disability, or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

For the criminal offence of **sexual extortion (Art. 166 CCRS)**, the MoI RS registered **11 cases** in the observed period (**5 cases in 2019, 2 cases in 2020, and 4 cases in 2021**). All the victims were women, with the data disaggregated by the age of the victim and the perpetrator, but not by ethnicity, disability, or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

For the criminal offence of **sexual harassment (Art. 170 CCRS)**, the MoI RS registered **42 cases in the observed period (15 cases in 2019, 15 cases in 2020, and 12 cases in 2021) in which 52 victims were recorded (20 victims in 2019, 20 victims in 2020, and 12 victims in 2021)**. For 2019 no detailed information on the age of the victims was recorded, it is known that 2 were boys and 18 were women, of which 12 were girls. The perpetrators were adult men. In 2020, 1 victim was an older minor (16-18 years old), while 19 victims were women (three up to 14 years old, 3 from 14 to 16, five from 16 to 18, two from 18 to 20, three from 20 to 30, one from 30 to 40, and two from 40 to 50 years old). The perpetrators were adult men. In 2020, all 20 victims were women (three up to 14 years old, three from 14 to 16, three from 16 to 18, one from 18 to 20, one from 20 to 30, and one from 40 to 50 years old). The perpetrators were adult men. The data is not disaggregated by ethnicity, disability or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

For the criminal offence of **violence in the family or family union (Art. 190 CCRS)**, the MoI RS registered **3,263 cases in the observed period (1,177 cases in 2019, 1,111 cases in 2020 and 948 cases in 2021)**. The data is disaggregated by sex, age, disability and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and not disaggregated by ethnicity of the victim or the perpetrator. The data is publicly available in the semi-annual records published by the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republika Srpska.

The Statistics Institute of the Republika Srpska publishes an annual announcement³⁴ on the statistics of crime showing the number of reported, accused and convicted persons for groups of criminal offences in which the data is disaggregated by the sex and age of the perpetrators (minors and adults). In response

³⁴ The data is publicly available on the web page of the Statistics Institute of the Republika Srpska.

to the questionnaire, the **Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republika Srpska** states that in connection with the *Protocol on handling the cases of violence, abuse and neglect of children*,³⁵ it submits to the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republika Srpska consolidated data on the number of child victims of violence by sex, age and forms of violence, which is recorded by the centres for social work/social protection services. The data is submitted in March every year for the previous year for the purpose of compiling a report on the implementation of the Protocol. The reports are partially publicly available on the website of the **Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports** (the last publicly available report is from 2018). The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republika Srpska does not collect data on registered cases of gender-based violence at health institutions. **The Public Health Institute of the Republika Srpska** publishes analyses on the health status of the population in the Republika Srpska on an annual basis, in which there is no data on registered cases of abuse according to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD10).

In the submitted response to the inquiry, the **Gender Centre of the Government of the Republika Srpska** states that it does not collect/record data on cases of domestic violence, sexual violence or other forms of gender-based violence. The Gender Centre provides expert support to the Statistics Institute of the Republika Srpska in establishing and improving gender-disaggregated statistics. Every two years, the Institute publishes the newsletter "Women and Men in the Republika Srpska", which presents data on crimes and misdemeanours including gender-based violence, classified by the sex and age of the victim and the perpetrator.³⁶ In the period 2020-2021, the Gender Centre of the Republika Srpska conducted four analyses in the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence, which are publicly available on the Centre's web page.³⁷

³⁵ Protocol on handling the cases of violence, abuse and neglect of children, Official Gazette RS, 82/13

³⁶ Statistical bulletin "Women and Men in the Republika Srpska" available on the web page of the Statistics Institute of the Republika Srpska at: <https://www.rzs.rs.ba/>

³⁷ Analysis of the attitudes, values and competences of direct providers of services to victims of violence and to women and family violence in six local communities: Prnjavor, Derventa, Brod, Laktaši, Srbac and Gradiška (2020), Assessment of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the institutional response to gender-based violence in the Republika Srpska (2020/2021), Analysis of the situation and response to gender-based violence and domestic violence in the municipalities of Eastern Herzegovina: Trebinje, Ljubinje, Nevesinje and Bileća (2021), Analysis of the capacity of educational institutions and the formulation of recommendations for the prevention, detection and response to gender-based violence in the Republika Srpska (2021). Available on the web page of the Gender Centre of the Government of the Republika Srpska at: <https://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/centri/gendercentarrs/Pages/default.aspx>

Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

For the purposes of monitoring the situation in the period **2019-2021**, data was collected from the **Ministry of the Interior of the Federation of BiH (MoI FBiH)** on registered cases of gender-based violence based on criminal offences³⁸

For the criminal offence of **murder (Art. 166 CCFBiH) in which women were identified as victims**, the MoI FBiH registered **15 cases - 7 cases in 2019, 5 cases in 2020, and 3 cases in 2021**. The data is disaggregated by the age of the victim and the perpetrator, and not disaggregated by ethnicity, disability or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

For the criminal offence of **lechery (Art. 208 CCFBiH)**, the MoI FBiH registered **118 cases - 39 cases in 2019, 36 cases in 2020, and 43 cases in 2021**. The data is disaggregated by the sex and age of the perpetrators, and not disaggregated by the sex and age of the victim or ethnicity of the victim and the perpetrator. **In 19 cases, the MoI FBiH states that the perpetrators are related to the victim** (8 cases in 2019, 7 cases in 2020, 4 cases in 2021), the type of relationship is unknown.

For the criminal offence of **rape (Art. 203 CCFBiH)**, the MoI FBiH registered **46 cases - 17 cases in 2019, 13 cases in 2020, and 16 cases in 2021**. The data is disaggregated by the sex and age of perpetrators, and not disaggregated by the sex and age of the victim or disability and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. All the perpetrators in the observed period were men.

For the criminal offence of **domestic violence (Art. 222 CCFBiH)**, the MoI FBiH registered **2735 cases - 956 cases in 2019, 839 cases in 2020, and 940 cases in 2020**. The data is classified by the sex and age of perpetrators (data for 2019 is missing), but not by the sex and age of the victim, nor by disability and the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. It is not known if the data is publicly available.

The **Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH** collects from the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of BiH (HJPC BiH) statistical data for criminal offences including domestic violence, sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence.³⁹ The data is disaggregated by the sex and age of the victim and the

³⁸ MoI FBiH's reply to the questionnaire submitted by the United Women Foundation in 2022.

³⁹ The data is collected for the following criminal offences under the CCFBiH: murder (Art. 166), incitement to suicide and assistance in suicide (Art. 170), illicit abortion (Art. 171), slight bodily injury (Art. 173), failure to render help (Art. 175), abandonment of a helpless person (Art. 176), infringement of the equality of individuals and citizens (Art. 177), kidnapping (Art. 180), maltreatment in discharge of duty (Art. 182), endangering security (Art. 183), infringing the inviolability of dwelling (Art. 184), unauthorised optical recording (Art. 189), rape (Art. 203), sexual intercourse with a helpless person (Art. 204), sexual intercourse by abuse of position (Art. 205), forced sexual intercourse (Art. 206), sexual

perpetrator, and not disaggregated by ethnicity or disability of the victim and the perpetrator. Data on disability is requested from the HJPC BiH, however, in the CMS system on the basis of which the HJPC BiH submits data, there is no statistical data on the disability of the victim and the perpetrator. Statistical data on the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator exists in the electronic records for domestic violence.⁴⁰ The Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH states that statistical data on cases of domestic violence, sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence is available in tabular form in the Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for preventing and combating domestic violence, the Report on the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan, the Report to CEDAW and the BiH Report on legislative and other measures for the implementation of the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), and that it can also be obtained based on a written request to the Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH.⁴¹ The Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH conducted five analyses and researches in the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence in the period 2020-2022.⁴²

The Ministry of Health of the Federation of BiH specifies that the data on cases of gender-based violence in health care is not disaggregated according to the parameters that contain the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee. The data is collected in accordance with the *Law on Health Records of the Federation of BiH*⁴³ and other regulations adopted in accordance with the Law. Health statistics is based on coding using the International Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death

intercourse with a child (Art. 207), lechery (Art. 208), satisfying lust in the presence of a child or juvenile (Art. 209), pandering (Art. 210), human trafficking (Art. 210a), organised human trafficking (Art. 210b), abuse of a child or juvenile for pornography (Art. 211), introducing pornography to a child (Art. 212), incest (Art. 213), bigamy (Art. 214), connivance at contracting illicit marriage (Art. 215), abduction of a child or juvenile (Art. 217), change of the family status (Art. 218), neglect or maltreatment of a child or juvenile (Art. 219), child desertion (Art. 220), breach of family obligations (Art. 221), domestic violence (Art. 222), avoiding the maintenance (Art. 223), preventing and not applying measures for protection of juveniles (Art. 224), malicious mischief (Art. 293, para (3)), violent behaviour (Art. 362) and gender-based violence, harassment and sexual harassment (Art. 29 of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH).

⁴⁰ According to the Report on the implementation of the BiH Gender Action Plan (2018-2022) for the period November 2018 - September 2019, the Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH continued to support the development of the Information System for maintaining data in the field of domestic violence in electronic form - a database. After the implementation of the pilot phase, the GC FBiH took over from the OSCE Mission in BiH the "software source code" for the electronic management of data on cases of domestic violence - a database.

⁴¹ The reply of the Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH to the questionnaire submitted by the United Women Foundation in 2022.

⁴² Analysis of programmes and regulations on the economic empowerment of women victims of domestic violence in the Federation of BiH (2021 - published and available), Analysis of the work of SOS hotline 1265 (2020, not published, the document is available), Research "The impact of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the problem of domestic violence" (2020, not published), Analysis of curricula and programmes of social sciences and humanities at the University of Sarajevo on the representation and scope of teaching content that treats the issue of gender-based violence and domestic violence (2021-2022, will be available by the end of 2022), Research on the implementation of a protective measure of mandatory psychosocial treatment of perpetrators of violence in accordance with the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence (in progress, results will be available in early 2023).

⁴³ Law on Records in the Field of Healthcare, Official Gazette FBiH, 37/12

(ICD, currently the 10th revision as a professional standard) and does not contain parameters recommended by the CEDAW Committee. **Category T74⁴⁴ explicitly refers to abuse and enables the registration of cases of abuse in medical practice.** Cantonal public health institutes collect data from health institutions and private practices and submit them to the Public Health Institute of the Federation of BiH through prescribed reporting forms in order to consolidate data for the entire Federation of BiH. The Ministry of Health of the Federation of BiH points out that **in current practice, category T74 is recorded in a very small number of cases**, which has been pointed out to health institutions on several occasions. As part of the education of healthcare workers, attention is focused on the correct recording and categorisation of injuries and conditions resulting from abuse. Feedback from health workers indicates that the **resulting injuries are entered in the health documentation under other disease codes** (according to the actual condition of the victim of abuse), where codes from category T74 are not added. The Ministry of Health of the Federation of BiH specifies that in order to overcome the observed problems in keeping records of cases of abuse, it intends to, in cooperation with the Public Health Institute of the Federation of BiH, adopt a special regulation that would deal with all issues of importance for records in the field of gender-based violence.

Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina

For the purposes of monitoring the situation in the period **2019-2021**, data was collected from the **Police of the Brčko District BiH (PBDBiH)** on registered cases of gender-based violence based by criminal offences⁴⁵

For the criminal offence of **murder (Art. 163 CCBDBiH)**, **PBDBiH registered 4 cases** - all the victims and perpetrators were men. The data is disaggregated by the age of the victim and the perpetrator, and not disaggregated by ethnicity, disability or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

The PBDBiH registered 3 cases in 2019 of the criminal offence of **rape (Art. 200 CCBDBiH)**, **while in 2020 and 2021 there were no cases.** All the victims were women (aged 16, 79 and 24) and the perpetrators were men (aged 20, 50 and 33). The data is not disaggregated by ethnicity, disability or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

⁴⁴ Category T74 refers to the maltreatment syndrome and includes: T74.0 neglect or abandonment, T74.1 physical abuse of the battered: baby or child syndrome (NOS) and spouse syndrome (NOS), T74.2 sexual abuse, T74.3 psychological abuse, T74.8 other maltreatment syndromes, T74.9 maltreatment syndrome, unspecified effects: abuse of adults (NOS), child abuse (NOS).

⁴⁵ The PBDBiH's reply to the questionnaire submitted by the United Women Foundation in 2022.

For the criminal offence of **lechery (Art. 215 CCBDBiH)**, the PBDBiH registered **one case in 2019, while in 2020 and 2021 there were no registered cases**. The victim was a girl (aged 10) and the perpetrator was a man (aged 57). The data is not disaggregated by ethnicity, disability or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

For the criminal offence of **domestic violence (Art. 218 CCBDBiH)**, the PBDBiH registered **42 cases - 17 cases in 2019, 8 in 2020 and 17 in 2021**. In 2019, 15 victims were women, 2 victims were men and 17 perpetrators were men. In 2020, 7 victims were women, 1 victim was a man and 8 perpetrators were men. In 2021, 15 victims were women, 2 victims were men and 15 perpetrators were men and 2 perpetrators were women. The data is disaggregated by the age of the victim and the perpetrator, and not disaggregated by ethnicity, disability or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

In the reports on crime and activities of the Brčko District BiH Police, which are available on the official website, there is no visible data on specific criminal offences, including acts of gender-based violence. The statistical bulletins published by the BiH Agency for Statistics, Brčko Office include data from the Brčko District BiH Police on the number of crimes related to gender-based violence (criminal offence against life and body, criminal offence against sexual freedom and morals, criminal offence against marriage, family and youth), the data is not disaggregated by specific parameters.⁴⁶

Data from Non-governmental Organisations Providing Specialised Services of Assistance and Support to Women Survivors of Violence

Alternative data on the number of cases of gender-based violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina collected by non-governmental organisations indicates a **continuous increase in these forms of violence**.

ata on the number of calls to SOS hotlines (1264 for the Republika Srpska, 1265 for the Federation of BiH) run by non-governmental organisations that provide specialised support and assistance services to women who survived violence indicates an **increased number of reports of violence and calls for help during the Corona virus pandemic** - 4202 calls received in 2019, 5011 calls received in 2020 (800 calls more than in 2019). The increase in the number of survivors of violence who sought help is also visible

⁴⁶ For instance, Statistical Bulletin of the Brčko District BiH, 09.03.2021. Available at: https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2021/BRC_00_2021_B1_0_BS.pdf

from data on the support of safe houses in BiH, which are also run by non-governmental organisations. In the first seven months of 2019, a total of 347 women and children stayed in safe houses, while in the same period in 2020, safe houses provided support to 519 women and children.⁴⁷ According to available research conducted by women's Roma organisations: 45.1% of Roma women were subjected to violence, in multiple forms, 47% of Roma women believe that they should stay married to a violent husband, 34% of Roma children witnessed physical violence against their mother by their father or mother's partner, 50% of Roma women have limited movement, i.e. it is conditioned by the permission of the partner/husband.⁴⁸ It is not possible to determine the exact number of Roma women subjected to violence because the institutions and safe houses providing support to women victims of violence do not keep such statistics.⁴⁹

Non-governmental organisations also point to the **increase in cases of femicide and an inadequate response of governmental institutions to prevent cases through the implementation of available legal measures**. Data collected on the basis of media monitoring indicates **16 cases of femicide in BiH in 2020-2021 - 7 cases in 2020 and 9 in 2021**. Compared to the data collected in 2020, the number of femicide cases increased by 28%. The average age of identified female victims is 47 - the youngest murdered woman was 29, while the oldest murdered woman was 88. Four women were killed by their husbands, and three women were killed by their ex-husbands. One woman was killed by her brother-in-law, and one woman was killed by a neighbour. The average age of identified female victims is 48 - the youngest perpetrator was 33, while the oldest perpetrator was 68. The number of women killed by firearms has increased. Six female victims (more than 66% of the total number of murders) were killed with a fire weapon (pistol, Kalashnikov) in 2021, while three female victims (more than 42% of the total number of murders) were killed by the use of firearms by perpetrators in 2020.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Thematic bulletin "Women and Men in BiH", Agency for Statistics of BiH, Sarajevo, 2022, pages 98 -99.

⁴⁸ Research on gender-based violence against Roma women, 2017 Available at: <https://www.bolja-buducnost.org/index.php/bs/ona-nama/dokumenti/send/3-istrazivanje/5-istrazivanje-o-rodno-zasnovanom-nasilju-nad-romkinjama-u-bih>

⁴⁹ Policy Brief "When laws are not equal for all: gender-based violence against Roma women", Informal Roma Women's Network "Uspjeh", 2022.

⁵⁰ More in the regional report "Femicide: Murders of Women in the Western Balkans region 2021", 2022, Available at: http://unitedwomenbl.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Femicid_izvjestaj_SR_final.pdf

The assessment of the impact of the conducted training sessions is not carried out systemically or institutionally, no clear monitoring indicators have been established, therefore there are no clear indicators available as to how much the training affects the improvement of access to work with women and children who have survived violence, enable effective and sensitised support and assistance based on the needs of survivors, as well as the prosecution of violence against women in the context of conducting investigations and examining cases of violence.

5.3 Preventing Gender Based Violence

Public institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina **do not have a continuous systemic approach to the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence.** Even though there is continuity in conducting awareness raising campaigns about the forms and impact of gender-based violence as well as available mechanisms of support and assistance for women subjected to violence, the campaigns are primarily tied to the periods marking international dates in the field of women's human rights, gender equality and gender-based violence (8 March, International Women's Day, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence), within projects supported by international donations. Campaigns are primarily carried out by public institutions that are recognised as institutional mechanisms for gender equality, with limited involvement of ministries and public institutions that are recognised as services of protection against gender-based violence. Regular school curricula do not include topics on gender-based violence and **they are implemented to a very limited extent in cooperation between schools and civil society organisations. Campaigns and awareness-raising activities on gender-based violence carried out by public institutions, as a rule, are not focused on raising awareness of the impact of violence on women and girls who belong to particularly marginalised groups,** including Roma women, LGBTIQ+ persons, elderly women, women with disabilities, etc.

Public institutions in BiH do not have a uniform institutional approach to the training of professionals in preventing and combating gender-based violence. There are no regulations that make such training obligatory for all law enforcement officers (judiciary, police) and for providers of

general support services, that is, institutions recognised as protection services from all forms of gender-based violence. The data collected by monitoring the work of public institutions indicates that capacity building relies heavily on the cooperation of public institutions and international organisations and agencies, as well as non-governmental organisations that are active in the field of preventing and combating violence and providing specialised support and assistance to women. The assessment of the impact of the conducted training sessions is not carried out systemically or institutionally, no clear monitoring indicators have been established, therefore there are no clear indicators available as to how much the training affects the improvement of access to work with women and children who have survived violence, enable effective and sensitised support and assistance based on the needs of survivors, as well as the prosecution of violence against women in the context of conducting investigations and examining cases of violence. It was not observed that training included a sensitised approach of professionals in working with multiple marginalised groups of women, including Roma women, rural women, women with disabilities, LGBTQ+ persons, elderly women, etc. Regular protocols for protection against domestic and gender-based violence do not provide for special training of service providers or specific actions if the victim of violence is a woman with disabilities.⁵¹

Chapter III of the Istanbul Convention (Articles 12-17) refers to the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence and includes a comprehensive approach through general obligations, awareness raising, education, training of professionals, preventive interventions and therapeutic programmes, as well as participation of the private sector and media. In the *Concluding observations and recommendations to the Sixth periodic report of BiH on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, the Committee urges the Party to “*assess the impact of the capacity-building provided to the judiciary, the police and other law enforcement officers, as well as relevant service providers, on the strict application of legislation criminalising all forms of gender-based violence against women and on gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods.*”⁵² **The recommendation of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention urges Bosnia and Herzegovina to “promote on a regular basis long-term awareness-raising**

⁵¹ Tanja Mandić Đokić et al. “Analysis of the state of gender-based violence against persons with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, Coalition “Informal group of organisations of persons with disabilities” of the Dobož region for the project “Gender-based violence against persons with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, November 2019. Available at: http://www.myright.ba/uimages/U4277EB7_Analiza20rodno20zasnovanog20nasilja20prema20prema20osobama20sa20invaliditetom20u20BiH.pdf

⁵² Point 26a, Concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee on the sixth periodic report of BiH (2019). Available at: https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BOS_CEDAW-C-BIH-Concluding-Observations-6_AsAdopted.pdf

campaigns to increase awareness among the population of the different manifestations of all forms of violence, beyond domestic violence, including in co-operation with women's rights organisations, in all parts of the territory. These campaigns should address underlying patriarchal and stereotypical attitudes towards women and should portray a gendered understanding of violence against women and provide women at the intersection of discrimination with information on their rights and the support service available to them (paragraph 88).⁵³

5.3.1 Raising Awareness of the General Public on Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina level

The BiH Gender Equality Agency of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees conducted in 2021 a public campaign focusing on preventing violence as part of marking 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence. The campaign had two main slogans "*Break the cycle of violence*" and "*Free yourself too*" and included billboards placed in the six largest cities of BiH, radio jingles aired 15 times, two animated commercials and animated web ads (banners) that were broadcast on paid advertising space on the most visited web portals, Google, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook.⁵⁴ The campaign was carried out with the USAID's support. Every year on the occasion of 8 March, International Women's Day, the Agency also organises the *Gender Equality Week in BiH*, devoting at least one topic to the prevention and fight against gender-based violence. The BiH Gender Equality Agency and the Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH established cooperation with the private sector - the company Mozzart on the campaign "Stop violence against women in BiH" during 16 Days of Activism in which athletes were involved in awareness-raising activities, and activities were carried out to support the beneficiaries of safe houses in BiH, economic empowerment of women fair in Banja Luka was attended and other activities were carried out.⁵⁵

⁵³ Recommendation 7 in relation to paragraph 88 of the Committee of the Parties of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul Convention IC-CP/Inf(2022)7, adopted on 6 December 2022, published on 12 December 2022

⁵⁴ Campaign videos available at the following links: <https://fb.watch/hg5hD5a4PA/>, <https://fb.watch/hg5iXKMB7/>

⁵⁵ More about the Mozzart company's activities on preventing gender-based violence and cooperation with institutional mechanisms for gender equality at: <https://arsbih.gov.ba/ujedinjeni-protiv-nasilja-nad-zenama-mozzart-i-agencija-za-ravnopravnost-polova-potpisali-protokol-o-saradnji/> i <https://srpskainfo.com/mozzart-i-ove-godine-uz-kampanju-16-dana-aktivizma-nastavlja-se-akcija-stop-nasilju-nad-zenama-u-bih/>

Republika Srpska

The ***Gender Centre of the Republika Srpska Government*** takes part in the 16 Days of Activism campaign against gender-based violence every year from 25 November until 10 December, conducting an awareness raising campaign titled “Living without Violence” and “The White Ribbon - Men's NO to Violence against Women”. The campaign conducted in 2021 via social networks included the messages “*Violence is not a private matter*”, “*You have the right to a person of trust*”, “*There is no justification for violence*” and others and was carried out in cooperation with UN Women and with the support of SIDA Sweden. The campaign is implemented in cooperation with all entity institutions, local self-government units and non-governmental organisations, with a contribution from athletes as well.⁵⁶ Since 2021, the Gender Centre has participated in the “*Generation for Equality*” campaign launched by UN Women on a global level and advocates for equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid work and domestic work, stopping sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls, health care services that match their needs and their equal participation in political life and decision-making in all walks of life.

The ***Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska*** annually contributes to the 16 Days of Activism campaign against gender-based violence⁵⁷ as well as to the street campaign Human Rights Days. In 2021, in the scope of the 16 Days of Activism, meetings were held with representatives of the prosecutor's office, Centre for Social Work, University Clinical Centre in Banja Luka, Rada Vranješević Home for Children without Parental Care, non-governmental organisations and associations.

⁵⁶ For instance:

<https://www.facebook.com/GendercentarRepublikeSrpske/posts/pfbid021WYv9CUw1XEwabxm9LPeYZoDpmBTTYTSBuEg3u9D3Decx3sikxbSvF4cB4DjgfmHlb>

⁵⁷ More about the MoI RS campaign at: <http://education.muprs.org/podrska-svjetskoj-kampanji-16-dana-aktivizma-protiv-rodno-zasnovanog-nasilja/>

Organisations that provide specialised support and assistance services to women who have survived gender-based violence through safe houses continuously contribute to raising public awareness of the causes and consequences of all forms of violence, as well as available assistance and support services. The activities include various interested groups in the community, as well as cooperation with public institutions at the local and cantonal level.

Federation of BiH

The **Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH** has implemented the campaign *#boljevako*⁵⁸ continuously since 2019 including video clips to promote positive partner relations and non-violence communication with children. So far, eight short videos have been made, one of which is a promotional video for an SOS hotline to help victims of domestic violence. The campaign messages are “Let’s strengthen partner relations and communication with children. Let’s give an example to others. Let’s change society by changing ourselves.” The campaign is carried out within the FIGAP program, which is financially supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden, through the development agency SIDA.

The **FBIH Ministry of the Interior**, in cooperation with UN Women and cantonal ministries of the interior carried out activities, from April 2019 until October 2020 and May 2022 onwards, focusing on a standardised and improved response of police officers and inspectors on cases of domestic violence in the Federation of BiH in accordance with obligations stemming from the Istanbul Convention.

Brčko District BiH

The **Police of the Brčko District BiH** contributes to 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence every year in cooperation with the non-governmental organisations Gender Brčko, Lara Foundation from Bijeljina, and Civic Association Viva Women from Tuzla.

Non-governmental Organisations

Organisations that provide specialised support and assistance services to women who have survived gender-based violence

⁵⁸ More information and campaign videos available at the following links: <https://www.gcfbih.gov.ba>, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAhjWPxyBbVzjH4zwlrdi7Q>

through safe houses continuously contribute to raising public awareness of the causes and consequences of all forms of violence, as well as available assistance and support services. The activities include various interested groups in the community, as well as cooperation with public institutions at the local and cantonal level.

Since April 2021, the **Lara Foundation from Bijeljina** has conducted the campaign *Break the Silence - Improving the Response to Sexual Violence in BiH* in cooperation with organisations managing safe houses to support women and girls survivors of violence in BiH: **Foundation of Local Democracy from Sarajevo, United Women Foundation from Banja Luka, Civic Association Budućnost from Modriča, Civic Association Viva Women from Tuzla, Association Women from Una from Bihać, Association Medica from Zenica and Women's Association Woman BiH from Mostar**.⁵⁹ **Infohouse Foundation from Sarajevo** in cooperation with organisations that run safe houses in BiH in the period May-June 2021 carried out the campaign *"It's time for economically independent women"* through social networks with the aim of pointing out the importance of economic independence of women, victims of violence as a key segment for exiting a violent union, as part of a project supported by European Union funds. **The Civic Association Budućnost from Modriča** in cooperation with organisations that run safe houses in BiH in the period June-July 2021 carried out the campaign *"Safe houses are more than a crisis centre"*, with the aim of raising awareness of the types of support and assistance to women and girls who survived gender-based violence, with a focus on crisis situations. The campaign was carried out within the project "Support to safe houses and victims of gender-based violence during COVID-19" supported by UN Women Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence in BiH in 2021, CA Budućnost from Modriča conducted an *online* campaign *"Words are powerful - let's choose them carefully"* with the aim of raising awareness about stereotypes and prejudices that justify sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in BiH. In the same period, CA Budućnost from Modriča, in cooperation with councillors of the Modriča Municipal Assembly, implemented a campaign on social networks *"I am against violence against women"*, with the aim of including local government representatives in raising awareness about violence against women, its causes and consequences. **Association Medica from Zenica** in the period 2019-2021 carried out continuous activities aimed at raising public awareness and preventing gender-based violence against women and girls through the commemoration of *19 June, the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, the commemoration of Children's Week (October)* and *16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence*. In 2019 survivors of wartime sexual

⁵⁹ More information on the "Break the Silence" campaign at: <https://www.facebook.com/PrekinimoCutanje>

violence from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina, leaders of the informal network of women from rural areas of the Zenica-Doboj Canton and basketball players from the Čelik Basketball Club from Zenica participated in the activities marking the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. Activities marking Children's Week included cantonal public institutions - the Centre for Children and Adults with Special Needs and partner organisations, as well as the Ministry of Labour, Social Policy and Refugees. 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence included members of the informal network of women from rural areas of the Zenica-Doboj Canton, beneficiaries of the Medica Safe House and representatives of the municipalities of Kakanj, Breza and Zavidovići. Medica from Zenica involves women activists, leaders, artists, journalists, representatives of primary schools and sports organisations in its awareness raising activities. In the course of 2019, the **United Women Foundation from Banja** carried out activities promoting support and assistance services to multiple marginalised women through cooperation with organisations that bring together Roma women, women from rural areas and women with disabilities. During 2020, the Foundation team members distributed 10,000 information flyers through street actions, in public places and information desks of public institutions with the aim of familiarising the general population, including women and girls who survived gender-based violence or are subjected to it, with the forms of violence and its consequences, and available support and assistance services. People from the public life of Bosnia and Herzegovina spoke about gender-based violence through 13 video messages, namely doctors, athletes, mayors, journalists, researchers and other public figures. Over 34,000 people viewed videos on the Foundation's social media profiles during the 16 Days of Activism campaign. In 2021, the Foundation carried out the *"No Means No"* campaign, in which the members of the team, through TV and radio broadcasts, websites, the preparation of videos and printed materials, as well as posts on social networks, contributed to raising awareness of the general population about sexual harassment and violence in public space. The United Women Foundation collaborated with Nina Babić, an academic painter from Banja Luka, to talk about domestic violence and violence against women through art. The exhibition *"Bequeathing Violence?"* was opened in July 2021 in Banja Luka in the presence of over 300 men and women from the public life of Republika Srpska, as well as displays in Trebinje, Sarajevo, Bihać and other cities. Every 25th of the month (Orange Day), at the local level in Banja Luka, the United Women Foundation, in cooperation with the Banja Luka City Administration and partner organisations, continuously organised street actions, exhibitions, fitness training, self-defence training for women, including over 400 citizens. The activities were supported by funds from the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, UN Women, as well as through institutional donor support.

5.4 Awareness Raising and Training of Professionals in Preventing and Combating Gender Based Violence

Examples of good practice in the implementation of institutionally integrated training of professionals in the system of protection from violence were observed through monitoring - **Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska and Ministry of Health of the Federation of BiH**. However, a **lack of structured impact assessment by the competent ministries** was also observed, **with clear indicators of progress**.

Overview of training sessions conducted by public institutions in BiH in the period 2019-2021

Institution	Number of trained professionals	Sectors	Training topics	Training impact assessment
BiH Gender Equality Agency	96 ⁶⁰	BiH level institutions from various sectors, centres for social work in the FBiH, health sectors (doctors of medicine)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Protection and prevention from sexual harassment and gender-based harassment – Psychosocial treatment of perpetrators of violence – Support to victims of rape and sexual violence 	The need was recognised to involve men as partners in overcoming of all forms of harassment and gender-based violence.
Gender Centre of the Republika Srpska Government	262	Judiciary, police, health care, social protection, education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implementation of the Istanbul Convention – Strengthening multi-sectoral response to violence against women and domestic violence at the local level – Challenges in the implementation of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Republika Srpska 	There is regular monitoring of the responses of local institutions, protection services, as well as continuous mentoring support through field visits and <i>online</i> communication. The findings and recommendations of these activities help in the development of future methodologies of education and public policies.

⁶⁰ The number refers to the period 2020-2021, no data for 2019. Information from the replies to the inquiry of the United Women Foundation sent to the BiH Gender Equality Agency in 2022

Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH	265 ⁶¹	Social protection, health care, police, education, judiciary, non-governmental organisations, media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Treatment and protection in cases of domestic violence – Psychosocial treatment of perpetrators of violence 	No concrete evaluation of the impact of the training sessions was carried out. An assessment of the implementation of the Strategy for preventing and combating domestic violence was carried out, including training of experts. An analysis of the multidisciplinary approach was carried out in the context of lessons learned. A case study was published showing the actions of professionals through cases from practice.
Police of the Brčko District BiH	-	-	Training of police officers is carried out in cooperation with police academies in BiH, centres for the education of judges and prosecutors of the RS and FBiH, and international organisations (ICITAP, UNDP, OSCE, IOM, etc.). Training of police officers on gender-based violence according to signed protocols is carried out by NGOs as part of their activities, which needs to be continued.	There is no assessment of the impact of training in the context of police officers' work with victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence, including domestic violence.
Department of Education of the Brčko District Government	-	-	No training conducted.	<i>Laws and public policies do not recognise mandatory training programmes for teachers and other staff in the education system on the topics of gender-based violence.</i>
Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska	171 ⁶²	Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Police Training Administration - Specialist training for working on cases of domestic violence according to the standards of the European Qualifications Framework for curricula. Certified/institutionalised training. – In cooperation with the Centre for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors of the RS, with the support of the Atlantic Initiative - multi-sectoral training for certified police officers, judges and prosecutors who act in cases of domestic violence. 	At the level of the RS MoI, an assessment of the impact of training is carried out through the daily work of police officers - a greater number of identified cases of domestic violence and better documentation of such offences, better cooperation with prosecutors and judges through more frequent determination of countermeasures for perpetrators of violence. Better commitment of trained/certified police officers and their more frequent communication with instructors from the Police Training Administration, better communication between police officers.

⁶¹ In addition to training sessions continuously organised, the Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH in the period 2020-2021 organised additional support for professionals who work in the field of domestic violence and violence against women through supervision as professional support and prevention of job stress and burnout. Supervision was organised for 87 professionals in Canton 10, Central Bosnia and West Herzegovina Cantons, a total of 98 group supervision meetings and 67 individual supervisions were organised. Supervision as professional support was, among other things, an opportunity for supervision of cases of violence and improvement of work in that area.

⁶² The number refers to trained police officers in the Republika Srpska in 2021. Information from the replies to the inquiry of the United Women Foundation sent to the Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska in 2022

Ministry of the Interior of the Federation of BiH	-	-	Members of the FBiH Police Administration participate in training sessions in this area conducted by international organisations and competent institutions in BiH. A project is underway that aims to integrate gender-based violence and domestic violence into basic training.	<i>The Ministry does not have any information as to whether the cantonal ministries of the interior conduct training impact assessment in the context of work of police officers and other employees with victims of gender-based violence, including domestic violence too.</i>
Ministry of Health of the Federation of BiH	900 ⁶³	Doctors of medicine/specialists in family medicine, urgent medical aid, gynaecology and obstetrics, psychiatry and psychology, nurses/technicians - visiting nurses	The cooperation program of the Ministry with UNFPA based on the Resource and Training Package "Strengthening the response of the healthcare system in the Federation of BiH to gender-based violence". Modules: introduction, situational analysis of response to gender-based violence in FBiH, legislative and regulatory frameworks, concept of gender-based violence, principles and standards for service provision, recognition of cases of gender-based violence, communication with victims of gender-based violence, first-line support, medical examination and care, risk assessment and safety planning, documentation of gender-based violence, creation of referral pathways integrated into health care, monitoring and evaluation of healthcare interventions in the area of gender-based violence, evaluation and closure of training.	A structured impact assessment was not done. The quality of the training is evaluated upon completion through workshops, conferences and round tables in the field of gender-based violence. The impact of completed training sessions on the practical work of health professionals is discussed in particular. Feedback from professionals from practice shows that the training empowered them to work with victims, that the procedures are clearer to them, and that they better understand the need for cooperation with other entities in the community in order to protect the victim. Information on recognising the signs of violence is useful for them. A constant challenge is the continuous fluctuation of the workforce through the health centres (transfer from service to service, especially nurses), while care is not taken to ensure that professionals who have received training in the field of gender-based violence are not transferred to services where they do not meet the victims. The goal is to keep trained professional staff in services where they can be helpful in cases of violence. Increasing the coverage of health professionals who have completed training in the field of gender-based violence is a big challenge.
Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republika Srpska	-	-	No training conducted.	-
Total:	1694			

⁶³ The number includes the Ministry's estimated number of 300 health professionals who have undergone training on an annual basis within the training sessions conducted by the Ministry in cooperation with UNFPA based on the resource and training package. Information from the replies to the inquiry of the United Women Foundation sent to the Ministry of Health of the Federation of BiH in 2022

5.4.1 Overview of Training Sessions of Professionals Conducted by Non-governmental Organisations⁶⁴ in BiH in the Period 2019-2021

Non-governmental organisations providing specialised support and assistance services to women who survived gender-based violence and running safe houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina, within their **activities continuously conduct training of professionals from public institutions recognised as services of protection from gender-based violence**. The training sessions are conducted on the basis of many years of practical experience of working directly with women victims of violence, continuous professional development of members of the organisation's teams. It is evident from the review that the training focuses on improving the behaviour of professionals in working with survivors of various forms of gender-based violence, as well as their knowledge of legal regulations and binding international standards. According to the available data, **the number of professionals trained by non-governmental organisations in the period 2019-2021 is higher than the number of professionals who underwent training organised by public institutions**. The continuity of training provided by non-governmental organisations depends on project planning, available financial resources through the support of international donors and cooperation with public institutions.

Non-governmental organisation	Number of trained professionals	Sectors	Training topics
Lara Foundation (Bijeljina)	204	Police, centres for social work, health institutions, educational institutions, court and prosecutor's office, mental health centres	Multi-sectoral response in preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women. Risk assessment and management in situations of domestic violence, protective measures, possibilities for improving criminal investigations in cases of domestic violence. The role of centres for social work in ensuring the protection of victims of domestic violence, initiating protective measures, understanding the trauma of violence.
Foundation of Local Democracy (Sarajevo)	140	Health professionals, police officers	Treatment of victims of domestic violence in health institutions of the Sarajevo Canton. Education of police officers on the topic of domestic violence.

⁶⁴ Covering training sessions by non-governmental organisations running safe houses in BiH, information collected through the Inquiry of the United Women Foundation in 2022. Data from CA Viva Women (Tuzla) and Women from Una (Bihać) missing.

Žena BiH (Mostar)	91	Mol of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, centres for social work, educational institutions, Coordination Body of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton	Procedure in cases of domestic violence, security plan and consequences of violence.
CA Medica (Zenica)	1015⁶⁵	Judiciary, police, health care, social protection, education	Protection of victims of violence, prevention of violence, protection of victims of human trafficking, dealing with cases of domestic violence, a sensitive approach to stress and trauma, children's rights.
CA Budućnost (Modriča)	200⁶⁶	Judicial institutions, police, centres for social work, health institutions, educational institutions, municipal/city administrations	Compliance of the domestic legislative framework with international documents, individual protection plan for victims of violence, case conference. Qualitative analysis of the relevant legislation in both entities on prevention and protection from gender-based violence, importance of education in protection from gender-based violence.
United Women Foundation (Banja Luka)	977	Police, judicial institutions, centres for social work, health institutions, free legal aid centres, educational institutions.	Law enforcement in the field of gender-based violence, actions of health institutions, psychological aspects of violence and mechanisms of overcoming.
Total:	2627		

5.5 Access to General Support Services for Women Survivors of Gender Based Violence

Bosnia and Herzegovina did not stipulate legal obligations of all officers implementing the laws and of professionals who provide general support services to inform the women who survived various forms of gender-based violence in a manner understandable to them, about the rights and services available within the protection services. Amendments to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Republika Srpska prescribe this obligation for all institutions to inform the victim of domestic violence upon first contact, in a manner understandable to them, about all the rights they have in accordance with this and other regulations and about institutions, bodies, legal entities and organisations that provide assistance, support and protection. The amendments also stipulate that victims of domestic violence are entitled to free legal aid.⁶⁷ Other regulations in BiH do not

⁶⁵ In the period 2019-2021, the number of training sessions conducted was 68, number of trained women professionals was 838, number of trained professionals was 177.

⁶⁶ Number of trained professionals in 2019 and 2021

⁶⁷ Art. 10, para 2-3 of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Republika Srpska, Official Gazette RS, 102/2012, 108/2013, 82/2015, 84/2019

contain similar provisions, victims of other forms of gender-based violence are not encompassed by this duty to inform.

Results of the research⁶⁸ conducted by the United Women Foundation show that **women victims of domestic violence have limited access to information about the measures that centres for social work can undertake to protect their rights, or the measures related to rehabilitation and integration of victims** (support with employment, financial support, access to social housing, etc.) 77% of the surveyed female beneficiaries of social work centres who survived violence in the past 12 months did not have access to emergency protection measures. 61% of the interviewed female beneficiaries who confirmed that they were subjected to violence in the past 12 months stated that the police had not submitted reports about the committed criminal offence to the competent prosecutor's offices. There were cases in which the police advised women subjected to domestic violence not to report the perpetrator of the violence. 57% of the interviewed beneficiaries stated that they were not informed in the centres for social work about the possibility of receiving psychological support for the violence they were subjected to. 49% of the interviewed beneficiaries stated that they did not receive information from the centre for social work about the possibility of obtaining safe housing. 81% of the interviewed beneficiaries stated that they did not receive information from the centres for social work about the possibility of receiving support in the process of solving the housing issue. 42% of the interviewed beneficiaries stated that they were not informed by the centres for social work about the possibilities of obtaining financial support. 80% of the interviewed beneficiaries stated that the centres for social work did not inform them about the possibility of obtaining employment support, and only 6% of the beneficiaries who survived violence received this type of support from the centres for social work. 96% of the interviewed beneficiaries stated that they did not receive information from the centres for social work about other support and assistance services.

In the context of **informing women who survived gender-based violence about available support and assistance services in health institutions**, the Ministry of Health of the Federation of BiH states that in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), written materials on rights and available support and assistance services were prepared and delivered to all health centres in the Federation of BiH during 2021. The Ministry states that the amount of informational material was certainly not sufficient, but it is helpful, and that health workers and associates have the obligation to provide the necessary information

⁶⁸ "Experiences of women victims of violence, service beneficiaries in receiving support from social work centres", Baseline Report - Bosnia and Herzegovina, United Women Foundation, 2021. Available at: <http://unitedwomenbl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Iskustva-zena-zrtava-nasilja-korisnica-servisa-u-dobijanju-podrske-od-CZSR.pdf>

to the victim of violence as a patient, as this is an integral part of professional work and a prescribed obligation under the Law on Health Care of the Federation of BiH and the Law on the Rights, Obligations and Responsibilities of Patients of the Federation of BiH.⁶⁹

Regions were observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina where victims of gender-based violence do not have access to free legal aid from the institute for free legal aid, which states that they act as defenders ex officio for perpetrators of violence (**Tuzla Canton, Federation of BiH**), i.e. that in their records they have data only on cases in which legal representatives of the Institute were appointed as ex officio defence counsel for those accused of committing a criminal offence of domestic violence (**Zenica-Doboj Canton, Federation of BiH**).⁷⁰ Some institutions state that they did not provide free legal aid to victims of domestic violence or victims of other forms of gender-based violence (**Goražde Cantonal Institute**). In the period 2019-2021, the **Odžak Cantonal Institute** provided legal assistance to 18 victims of domestic violence in divorce proceedings. Victims of violence who apply for free legal aid are informed about their rights and available assistance directly at the office of the Odžak Cantonal Institute, and there are also written materials available.

In the same period, the **Free Legal Aid Centre of the Government of the Republika Srpska** provided legal assistance to 177 victims of violence, two of whom were victims of sexual violence, while the remaining victims were registered as victims of domestic violence. The Centre classifies the data by the type of services provided, but not by the gender of the victim of violence who applied for free legal aid, therefore it is not possible to determine how many women who survived violence used free legal aid services provided by the Centre. Seventy (70) victims of domestic violence received legal advice, and 105 persons who were identified as victims of domestic violence received legal assistance in the form of representation in civil, non-litigation and executive proceedings. The Centre's offices are available to victims of violence in five local communities (**Banja Luka, Doboj, East Sarajevo, Trebinje and Bijeljina**). Employees of the Centre inform every person, including victims of violence, who contact them directly, by e-mail or by telephone, about their rights and the services provided by the Centre. There are also materials in writing available in a visible place at the very entrance to the Centre, and each party can take them, look at them, take them with them or ask for clarifications.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Based on the reply to the inquiry submitted by the United Women Foundation Banja Luka in 2022 to the Ministry of Health of the Federation of BiH

⁷⁰ Based on replies to the inquiry submitted by the United Women Foundation Banja Luka in 2022 to cantonal centres providing free legal aid.

⁷¹ Based on replies to the inquiry submitted by the United Women Foundation Banja Luka in 2022 to the Free Legal Aid Centre of the Government of the Republika Srpska.

The findings of the monitoring of court proceedings in the field of gender-based violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina indicate that **adult women who have survived some form of gender-based violence are generally not recognised as victims who exercise the right to special types of protection and support when testifying in proceedings against perpetrators of violence.** In this regard, judicial practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina has remained unchanged since 2011, since when organisations dealing with the protection of women’s human rights have been monitoring court proceedings in the field of gender-based violence. Victims very rarely come to court with the support of a legal representative/lawyer, and adult victims of violence usually do not have psychological support in the courtroom when testifying. The passivity of the victim in criminal proceedings is most often interpreted against her interests, but also against the interests of the prosecution function. Courts continue to refer to the victim’s statement that she is dropping criminal charges and that she will not file a property claim, as mitigating circumstances or as a reason for dropping criminal charges. It is worrisome that in only 6% of criminal proceedings for gender-based violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the victim in the criminal proceedings filed a property claim against the perpetrator, and that by monitoring court proceedings during 2019, only one procedure was identified in which the victims of violence were granted property claim within the procedure.⁷² The practice of courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to refer women survivors of violence to civil proceedings for damages, which they usually do not initiate due to the lack of adequate legal assistance and financial resources to cover the costs of the proceedings.⁷³

5.6 Provision of Specialized Services of Assistance and Support for Women Survivors of Gender Based Violence

Institutions in BiH apply different models of financing the housing of victims of domestic violence in safe houses, while specialised services provided to women victims of violence who are not accommodated in safe houses are provided on the basis of support of international donors, including the support to women victims of other forms of gender-based violence.

⁷² Proceedings before the Basic Court in Bijeljina, for the criminal offence of exploitation of children for pornography (Art. 175, para 1 of the CCRS) in which the court, pursuant to Art. 108, para 3 CPCR awarded the property legal claim and the obligation of the accused to pay the minor victims an amount of BAM4,000 each in compensation for material and non-material damage within one year from the finality of the verdict.

⁷³ Based on experiences of the United Women Foundation Banja Luka and Women’s Rights Centre from Zenica presented in analytical reports on the monitoring of court proceedings in the field of gender-based violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The latest 2020 report available at: http://unitedwomenbl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Analiticki-izvjestaj_FINAL_WEB-1.pdf

The recommendation of the Committee of the Parties of the Istanbul Convention urges Bosnia and Herzegovina to *“ensure sustainable funding levels for women’s NGOs that run specialist support services for women victims of all forms of violence, in all parts of the territory, through transparent and accountable procurement procedures, and to establish at different levels of government consultative dialogues with women’s rights organisations in order to incorporate their opinions and experiences into the design of policies to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women (paragraphs 43 and 47).⁷⁴*

In the Republika Srpska, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports allocates BAM300,000 per year, which is 70% of the obligations regulated by law, for the temporary care and accommodation of victims of domestic violence in the RS. The remaining 30% of financial resources is the obligation of local communities, which sporadically fulfil this obligation. It is troubling that local centres for social work often avoid the obligation to place women and children victims of violence in safe houses in order to avoid paying costs, thus endangering the safety of victims and limiting the availability of services to women who have survived violence.

In the Federation of BiH, funds for financing the operations of safe houses are planned as grant funds for the implementation of the FBiH Law on Protection from Domestic Violence. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Federation of BiH allocates around BAM250,000 annually, which should be a temporary solution until the adoption of the Rulebook regulating the accommodation of victims of domestic violence in a safe house. The funds are insufficient to finance the work of five safe houses in the Federation of BiH, which, apart from the safe houses in Sarajevo and Zenica, do not have adequate funding from cantonal institutions and depend on the support from international donors. Sustainable exit strategies and support for women survivors of violence through economic empowerment, financial support, employment support and social housing almost entirely depend on programmes implemented by non-governmental organisations, with very limited support from government institutions/public budget funds.

⁷⁴ Recommendation 4 in relation to paragraphs 43 and 47 of the Committee of the Parties on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul Convention IC-CP/Inf(2022)7, adopted on 6 December 2022, published on 12 December 2022

According to available research conducted by the Safe Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina, **in the period 2019-2021, non-governmental organisations in BiH provided 4,263 free legal aid services for women who were subjected to domestic violence - mostly in 2020 during the worst impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.** ⁷⁵ In BiH, there are currently eight safe houses run by non-governmental organisations - **Foundation of Local Democracy (Sarajevo), Lara Foundation (Bijeljina), Women's Association Žena BiH (Mostar), United Women Foundation (Banja Luka), Association Medica (Zenica), Association Viva Women (Tuzla)**, which also provide free psychological support through psychotherapy and SOS counselling, general counselling support, medical support, financial support, help with employment and economic empowerment in the process of exiting violence.

Two SOS hotlines (**1264 for the Republika Srpska, 1265 for the Federation of BiH**) are fully supported by trained counsellors from non-governmental organisations who for the most part do not receive compensation for this type of victim support. SOS hotlines are not available to all victims on an equal basis because they are linked to operators whose license/short number is paid for by the state. It is also the only cost borne by the state for the operation of the SOS hotline to support victims of violence.

According to the experiences of organisations working with Roma women, Roma women who turn to public institutions and shelters encounter difficulties in obtaining support and/or services that are usually available to victims of domestic violence. Roma women victims of gender-based violence face numerous challenges: they have nowhere to go and safe houses are very short and ineffective solutions; male children of 15 years of age cannot be placed with their mothers in safe houses, and victims do not want to leave their children with the perpetrator of violence; changing the place of residence affects the realisation of social benefits, which leaves Roma women without any income and ultimately leads them to return to the perpetrator of violence, where they sometimes suffer greater violence due to leaving or reporting. This creates situations of dependency on a system that does not work. This perpetuates the cycle of violence because the victims are forced to choose between children/survival and returning to the perpetrator of violence, without safe accommodation, without adequate support and the possibility to live independently.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ " Analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on specialised support services for victims of domestic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina", Foundation of Local Democracy Sarajevo and CA Budućnost Modriča, on behalf of Safe Network BiH, March, 2022.

⁷⁶ Policy Brief "When laws are not equal: gender-based violence against Roma women", Informal Roma Women's Network "Uspjeh", 2022

In the period 2019-2021, **Foundation of Local Democracy (Sarajevo)** provided **safe accommodation and support in recovery from violence** to **320 survivors** of gender-based violence, provided counselling support via **SOS hotline for victims of violence** which received **3041 calls** (307 calls in 2019, 1360 calls in 2020 and 1374 calls in 2021). The Foundation operates a **Centre for Women** that provides legal, psychological and socioeconomic support for women who have survived violence. In the observed period, the centre provided **2809 specialised legal, psychological and socioeconomic support services for 1492 beneficiaries** (in 2019 – 493 beneficiaries, 1032 services, 2020 – 567 beneficiaries, 1000 services, in 2021 – 432 beneficiaries, 777 services). The Foundation of Local Democracy provides specialised support and assistance services for women who have survived gender-based violence in the regions of **Sarajevo Canton and Bosnian-Podrinje Canton (Goražde)**. Available services of specialised support and assistance services are free legal advice, free representation in court, psychosocial counselling, SOS hotline, safe house, economic empowerment (support in finding employment, self-employment, etc.). Support and assistance services are available to all groups of women equally, without exception, and information about services is available through social networks, media campaigns, media appearances and street actions. Brochures with information about specialised services are available at health centres, social work centres, mental health centres and police departments.

Beneficiaries of the Safe House can stay in accordance with the need to solve the case, in cooperation with them an individual protection plan is made that includes an exit strategy within which the agreement on the time frame of the stay is defined. As a rule, the protection plan is prepared for a period of six months, in accordance with the planned stay according to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of FBiH. Accommodation is arranged with the competent social protection service, which accommodated the survivor in the Safe House and which has been involved in the case since the beginning of the stay. The period of stay is agreed with the case manager in accordance with the assessment of the expert team of the Safe House and the expert team of the competent social protection service. Accommodation has no upper limit of stay.

The Foundation of Local Democracy points out that there are **architectural barriers for people with physical disabilities** in using the support of the safe house because the beneficiaries stay on the floor that is reached by stairs. For this reason, a useful support to the Safe House in Sarajevo would be a ramp for moving up/down the stairs for people with disabilities. For people with hearing and vision impairments, there are no obstacles to accommodation in a safe house if they can take care of their needs.

In the period 2019-2021, the **Lara Foundation (Bijeljina)** provided a **total of 3,827 specialised services of free legal and psychosocial assistance and support for 2,146 beneficiaries** (894 services for 574 beneficiaries in 2019, 1,508 services for 821 beneficiaries in 2020, 1,425 services for 751 users in 2021). The Lara Foundation provides specialised support and assistance services for women who have survived gender-based violence in the **Brčko District and the region covered by the District Public Prosecutor's Office of Bijeljina, as well as in the municipalities in the eastern part of Republika Srpska**. Available specialised support and assistance services are free legal advice and assistance, psychosocial counselling, SOS hotline, safe house, support of a person of trust in procedures related to violence, economic empowerment (support in finding employment, self-employment, etc.), self-help groups for victims of violence. The Lara Foundation uses brochures, flyers, informational posters that team members distribute during street actions and workshops, during visits to institutions; they are available on the Foundation's premises and through posts on social networks. Information leaflets are periodically distributed to health institutions, schools, hairdressing salons, information desks of public institutions that are recognised as protection services against violence, other public services, economic entities with which the Lara Foundation cooperates, information desks of shopping centres that support informing citizens about violence and other topics. All specialised services are available to all groups of women.

Specialised support and assistance services for survivors of gender-based violence are available to women beneficiaries without time limits, as long as necessary. A safe house is available for people with any kind of vulnerability. There are certain architectural obstacles in accessing the premises of the Lara Foundation for people in wheelchairs, and financial resources are needed for the construction of access to the premises of the Lara Foundation for persons with disabilities.

In the period 2019-2021, the **Civic Association Budućnost (Modriča)** provided **safe accommodation and support to 388 survivors of gender-based violence** (161 women and 227 children, of whom 20 children were without parental escort). As part of the work with survivors, CA Budućnost provides specialised support and assistance services through free legal advice and assistance, psychosocial counselling, SOS hotline, safe house support and economic empowerment (support in finding employment, self-employment), it provided 205 pieces of legal advice on the rights of survivors of gender-based violence. As part of psychological assistance, 251 individual sessions were held with children and 161 sessions with women, and **76 group sessions with children and 25 group sessions with women who survived violence**. The social worker provided **359 specialised counselling support services, 277 pedagogical sessions were held**. The CA Budućnost team continuously provides support to survivors of gender-based violence through the

implementation of occupational activities, continuous health care and accompaniment during visits to health institutions. Since 2010, the CA Budućnost has been running the **Men's Centre in Modriča**, which carries out counselling and therapeutic work with perpetrators of violence on the basis of voluntary participation or the recommendation of public institutions. The Safe House and Men's Centre's teams made **83 field visits** independently and in cooperation with the competent centre for social work. In the period 2020-2021, the CA Budućnost team provided counselling support through the SOS hotline for victims of violence and received **4,506 calls (2,144 calls in 2020 and 2,362 calls in 2021)**.

Specialised support and assistance services are available to all women, members of marginalised groups, without exception. Services are provided primarily to beneficiaries in the Doboj region, and if necessary, also to women from other areas. In connection with the specialised care service in the Safe House, the CA Budućnost is guided by the provision of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the RS, which prescribes a period of six months with an extension of additional six months. It often happens that survivors stay much longer, and the costs of their stay are covered by the CA Budućnost. Other specialised support and assistance services are available without time limits. Citizens are introduced to available services through leaflets and brochures, through social networks, local websites, radio and TV shows.

In the period 2019-2021, the **Medica Association (Zenica)** provided **safe accommodation for 198 survivors of gender-based violence** (63 women and 135 children - 80 girls and 55 boys) who were provided with **26,986 specialised services** - complete logistical support, medical services and medical education, group and individual psychosocial work with beneficiaries, occupational therapy, educational work with children, mediation and contacts with institutions and support and accompaniment when exercising various rights before public institutions. A total of **207 people** (179 women, 7 children and 21 men) approached the **Psychological Counselling Centre** for the first time, with whom the team members spent **416 therapy sessions**. Through the psychological counselling centre, support for perpetrators of violence is available on a voluntary basis, and in the observed period, one perpetrator came to the centre. A total of 111 women approached the **Legal Counselling Centre** for the first time, and they were provided with **191 legal counselling services**, as legal assistance in the procedures for exercising the rights of wartime rape survivors in the procedures for exercising the rights of a special category. A total of **638 identified calls** were received on Medica's active phones (114 calls in 2019, 393 calls in 2020 and 131 calls in 2021) and **578 interventions** were carried out through psychological support, information, legal assistance, sending letters to police administrations/stations and centres for social work. As part of **economic and psychosocial empowerment**, **127 women (safe house beneficiaries and women from rural areas)**

were supported in the Medica educational centre and rural areas. As part of the **work with survivors of wartime rape and sexual violence**, support was provided for **189 people** through **543 services** that included emotional support, individual counselling and therapeutic work due to exposure to various stressful situations, psychological support, financial support, mediation with public institutions in exercising rights from social protection, logistical support (transportation, food), legal support in achieving the status of a civilian victim of war, writing complaints, supportive interventions in accordance with the needs of beneficiaries, psychological support when giving statements to the media and participation of survivors in public events.

The care of survivors of gender-based violence is carried out according to already established procedures, regardless of whether they belong to marginalised groups of women or not. Access for people with disabilities to Medica's premises is limited due to architectural barriers and funding is needed to install a ramp to ensure access. Medica regularly shares information about available specialised support and assistance services through social networks (Facebook) and website, through video materials, but also by sharing informational material during street actions and public events. Specialised support and assistance services are available to all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the period 2019-2021, the Women's Association Žena BiH (Mostar) provided safe accommodation for **67 survivors of gender-based violence, provided 644 specialised support and assistance services in the counselling centre, and 915 services via telephone and social networks**. Žena BiH provides free legal advice and assistance, psychosocial counselling, support via SOS hotline, care and support for survivors through the Safe House and economic empowerment (support in finding employment, self-employment, etc.) to women who have survived gender-based violence. Žena BiH provides support to survivors of gender-based violence primarily in the area of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, and, if necessary, in the region of Herzegovina. Support is available to all survivors on an equal basis, including marginalised groups of women. The Safe House has architectural barriers and needs to be accessible for people with disabilities. Informing the beneficiaries/potential beneficiaries about their rights and available services is usually carried out through social networks, and if financial resources are available, also through leaflets, posters and brochures.

In the period 2019-2021, the **United Women Foundation (Banja Luka)** provided safe accommodation and support in recovery from violence for **126 women and children who survived gender-based violence and received 3982 calls to the SOS hotline to support victims of violence. 1149 women received free legal aid, 491 beneficiaries received support through economic empowerment, including the Fund**

for Economic Empowerment of Women, and 150 beneficiaries received support through a self-help group. Through the services of the **psychological counselling centre**, which has been available at the United Women Foundation from 2021, **twelve women who survived violence and were not beneficiaries of the Safe House received psychological support.** The Foundation provides specialised support and assistance services for women and children survivors of gender-based violence through the accommodation and support of the Safe House, free legal advice, SOS hotline for victims of violence, psychological support, support of a person of trust in domestic violence proceedings before public institutions, groups for self-help for survivors, occupational therapy and economic empowerment (support through the Fund for Economic Empowerment of Women, support in employment and self-employment, etc.). The Foundation provides support primarily to beneficiaries from the wider area of the Banja Luka region, but also from other regions as needed through cooperation with public institutions and if women directly apply for help. Specialised services are available to women of all categories on an equal basis, including marginalised groups of women. Information about available services and rights of women survivors of gender-based violence is available in the form of leaflets and brochures that team members continuously make available to beneficiaries through street actions, distribution to info desks at public institutions that are recognised as protection services, but also through social networks.

The Association Women from Una (Bihać) provides specialised support and assistance through the work of the Safe House - a shelter for victims of domestic violence, victims of sexual abuse and human trafficking, and the free legal advice centre. The safe house provides adequate accommodation for women and children victims of trauma and violence during their recovery process. The Free Legal Advice Centre provides legal assistance to natural persons, citizens, women victims of domestic violence and other persons who fall into socially vulnerable categories and who are not in a situation to exercise their rights and legally based interests before the courts in BiH.

The Association Viva Women (Tuzla) within the Centre for Therapy and Rehabilitation works with women and children who have survived gender-based violence through accommodation in the Safe House, free legal aid, SOS hotline support, psychotherapy, family counselling, occupational therapy and other specialised support and assistance services. Like the Medica Association, the Association Viva Women specialises in working with victims of wartime torture, including sexual violence, and regularly informs citizens about available services and rights through its website, social networks and street actions. Viva Women primarily provides support to survivors from the area of the Tuzla Canton, but also from the wider area if there is a need for it. Services are available to all categories of women on an equal basis.

5.7 Financial Support from Public Budgets to Civil Society Organisations Providing Support to Women Survivors of Gender Based Violence

The Foundation of Local Democracy from Sarajevo in the period 2019-2021 received financial support from public budgets for workshops, training sessions and education on gender-based violence, provision of free legal and psychosocial support to victims of violence, and for accommodation and support of a safe house for victims of violence. The Foundation specifies that the funds from the public budgets are available through public competitions/calls.⁷⁷

The Foundation of Local Democracy from Sarajevo		
2019	Municipality Stari Grad (Sarajevo) for the project "Violence is not My Choice" - workshops for prevention of violence in schools	BAM11,539.20
	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Sarajevo Canton – accommodation of victims of violence in the Safe House	BAM149,752.12
	FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy "Game of chance lottery" - workshops for children at the Safe House, resocialisation of persons with special needs - victims of domestic violence	BAM11,354
	BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees:	-
	Total 2019:	BAM172,645
2020	Municipality Stari Grad (Sarajevo): -	-
	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Sarajevo Canton – accommodation of victims of violence in the Safe House	BAM153,450
	FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy "Game of chance lottery" - workshops for children at the Safe House, economic empowerment of victims of violence through workshops	BAM16,432.20
	BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees "Strengthening the capacity of institutions to solve gender-based violence through education"	BAM23,555.18
	Total 2020:	BAM193,437
2021	Municipality Stari Grad (Sarajevo):	-
	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Sarajevo Canton – accommodation of victims of violence in the Safe House	BAM159,381.30
	FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy "Game of chance lottery" - educational and creative workshops for children and young girls	BAM12,427
	BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees - "Co-financing the operation of safe houses for housing women victims of violence"	BAM12,500
	Total 2021:	BAM184,308

⁷⁷ Based on the replies to the inquiry of the United Women Foundation sent to the Foundation of Local Democracy in 2022.

In the period 2019-2021, the **Lara Foundation from Bijeljina** received financial support from public budgets for the accommodation and support of a safe house for victims of violence. In 2021 alone, funds from public budgets covered 81% of the direct costs of the Safe House for victims of violence in Bijeljina. All other specialised support and assistance services, including legal assistance, SOS hotline, psychological counselling, support of a person of trust, the greatest extent included volunteer work of Lara Foundation team members, including expert workers of the Safe House, who are paid for their work based on engagement on projects, that is, work in the Safe House. The necessary funds for work ranges from the number of beneficiaries, to the number of days they stay in the Safe House, the complexity of the needs, and the like. With a larger number of Safe House beneficiaries, the funds for reimbursement increase, however, the costs of this service also increase. In addition, on an annual level, an average of about BAM20,000 of the costs of housing the beneficiaries in the Safe House remain unreimbursed, because most municipalities/local communities do not pay 30% of the cost of caring for the beneficiaries in the Safe House, which affects the amount of fees for the work of professionals at the Safe House. The missing funds to cover the total costs of specialised support services and help for victims of violence are at least 3 average salaries of expert workers for these services, so a minimum of up to BAM8,000 per month for the costs of legal aid, psychological counselling, SOS hotline duty and other costs. The Foundation recounts that financial resources from public budgets are available on the basis of legal regulations (payments from the budget of local communities that pay the costs of caring for victims of violence), through public tenders/calls and direct allocation (costs of cold storage from the budget of the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees).⁷⁸

Lara Foundation from Bijeljina		
2019	Municipalities/local level - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM2,787.98
	Republika Srpska budget - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM54,689.70
	BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees - grant support for promotion of Safe House operations	BAM19,560
	Total 2019:	BAM77,038
2020	Municipalities/local level - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM28,926.03
	Republika Srpska budget - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM68,620.82
	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees - providing support to safe houses in BiH for regular activities and capacity maintenance	BAM16,972.50
	Total 2020:	BAM114,519

⁷⁸ Based on replies to the inquiry of the United Women Foundation sent to the Lara Foundation in 2022.

2021	Municipalities/local level - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM31,964.42
	Republika Srpska budget - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM82,974.42
	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees - for Safe House cold-storage facility costs	BAM14,583.33
	Total 2021:	BAM129,522

In the period 2019-2021, **CA Budućnost from Modriča** had the financial support from public budgets for safe house accommodation and support for victims of violence. Funds from public budgets are not sufficient for the real costs of activities to prevent and combat gender-based violence. The biggest problem is the non-coverage of the safe house's cold-storage facility and the fact that payments are delayed. Servicing of the SOS hotline and the work of operators is not covered by the reimbursement of costs from public budgets. Without donor financial support, CA Budućnost would not be able to operate in the capacity necessary to support victims of violence.⁷⁹

CA Budućnost from Modriča		
2019	Municipalities/local level - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM7,620
	Republika Srpska budget - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM75,780
	BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees	BAM19,870
	Total 2019:	BAM103,270
2020	Municipalities/local level - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM14,315
	Republika Srpska budget - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM78,452
	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees	BAM17,300
	Total 2020:	BAM110,067
2021	Municipalities/local level - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM20,890
	Republika Srpska budget - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM74,777
	BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees	BAM28,500
	Total 2021:	BAM124,167

In the period 2019-2021, **the Association Medica from Zenica** had the financial support from public budgets for safe house accommodation and support for victims of violence. Since 2021, by signing the new Protocol on mutual cooperation with the Government of Zenica-Doboj Canton, co-financing of the Safe House in the amount of BAM108,000 on an annual basis was made possible. By applying to the FBiH

⁷⁹ Based on the replies to the inquiry of the United Women Foundation sent to the CA Budućnost in 2022.

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Medica received funding for Safe House operations every year within public calls. The funds allocated from the public budget of the Federation of BiH are not sufficient. The annual budget of the Safe House run by Medica is BAM380,000, and on average up to 15% of the costs of the Safe House are co-financed from the entity budget, which is not in accordance with the obligation prescribed by the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Federation of BiH, which provides for 70% co-financing of the costs of safe houses in the Federation of BiH. For specialised support and assistance services, which include psychological and legal counselling and SOS hotline support, no funds are allocated from the public budget, and Medica estimates that these services require funds in the amount of BAM100,000 annually.⁸⁰

Association Medica from Zenica		
2019	Municipal/local level:	-
	Cantonal budget funds - funds for the Safe House on the basis of co-funding under the Protocol	BAM54,000
	FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - funds for the Safe House based on the projects applied to public calls	BAM60,000 (approximate amount)
	State budget funds:	-
	Total 2019:	BAM114,000
2020	Municipal/local level:	-
	Cantonal budget funds - funds for the Safe House on the basis of co-funding under the Protocol	BAM54,000
	FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - funds for the Safe House based on the projects applied to public calls	BAM60,000 (approximate amount)
	State budget funds:	-
	Total 2020:	BAM114,000
2021	Municipal/local level:	-
	Cantonal budget funds - funds for the Safe House on the basis of co-funding under the Protocol	BAM108000
	FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - funds for the Safe House based on the projects applied to public calls	BAM63,979.36
	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees - for Safe House cold-storage facility costs	BAM12,500
	Total 2021:	BAM184,479

⁸⁰ Based on the replies to the inquiry of the United Women Foundation sent to the Association Medica in 2022.

In the period 2019-2021, the **Association Žena BiH from Mostar** received financial support from public budgets through public tenders for housing and providing free legal and psychosocial support to survivors at the Safe House through public tenders. Support from public budgets did not cover the real costs of providing specialised services of the Safe House, which is additionally financed through the financial support of the international community. The Association's assessment is that the regular functioning of the Counselling Centre and Safe House, where basic specialised support services and assistance to survivors of gender-based violence are provided, requires a minimum of BAM250,000 annually.⁸¹

Association Žena BiH from Mostar		
2019	Municipal/local level:	-
	Cantonal budget funds - funds for providing free psychosocial and legal assistance to victims of violence in the Safe House and Counselling Centre	BAM2,000
	FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - costs of accommodating women and children victims of violence in the Safe House	BAM44,900
	Resources from the state budget:	-
	Total 2019:	BAM46,900
2020	Municipal/local level:	-
	Cantonal budget funds - funds for providing free psychosocial and legal assistance to victims of violence in the Safe House and Counselling Centre	BAM3,000
	FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - costs of accommodating women and children victims of violence in the Safe House	BAM34,789.63
	BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees - Safe House cold-storage facility costs	BAM12,500
	Total 2020:	BAM50,289.63
2021	Municipal/local level:	-
	Cantonal budget funds - funds for providing free psychosocial and legal assistance to victims of violence in the Safe House and Counselling Centre	BAM2,000
	FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - costs of accommodating women and children victims of violence in the Safe House	BAM37,478
	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees - Safe House cold-storage facility costs	BAM12,500
	Total 2021:	BAM51,978

⁸¹ Based on the replies to the inquiry of the United Women Foundation sent to the Association Žena BiH in 2022.

In the period 2019-2021, the **United Women Foundation from Banja Luka** received financial support from public budgets for housing and providing free legal and psychosocial support to survivors through Safe House activities. The annual budget of the Safe House run by the United Women Foundation is BAM312,000 and funds from public budgets are not sufficient to cover the real costs. Funds from the Republika Srpska budget are reimbursed on a quarterly basis and refunds are often delayed by 3 to 9 months. Other specialised services, including legal and psychosocial support for women who are not Safe House beneficiaries, counselling via SOS hotline, self-help group, support of a person of trust, economic empowerment of survivors of violence are available on the basis of donor funds provided by the Foundation through donations. The funds needed for specialised support and assistance services for beneficiaries who are not in the Safe House are BAM100,000 annually.

United Women Foundation from Banja Luka		
2019	Municipalities/local level - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM50,559.81
	Republika Srpska budget - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM239,155.75⁸²
	BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees:	-
	Total 2019:	BAM289,716
2020	Municipalities/local level - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM45,881.12
	Republika Srpska budget - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM130,793.16⁸³
	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees:	-
	Total 2020:	BAM176,674
2021	Municipalities/local level - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM42,209.32
	Republika Srpska budget - reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House	BAM134,952.35⁸⁴
	BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees - for Safe House cold-storage facility costs	BAM12,500
	Total 2021:	BAM189,662

⁸² Inclusive of the reimbursement of costs of accommodation in the Safe House for previous years, due to delays in payments from the public budget of the Republika Srpska

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Ibid

5.8 Specialised Services for Women Survivors of Other Forms of Gender Based Violence (Sexual Violence)

Bosnia and Herzegovina **launched activities to establish support services for victims of sexual violence** by launching an initiative to set up pilot crisis centres for victims of rape and sexual violence in three medical institutions in the Federation of BiH. No similar activities were carried out in the Republika Srpska or Brčko District BiH. There is a lack of clear institutional reference mechanisms, availability of services throughout the BiH territory and trained staff for working with victims of sexual violence with public institutions recognised as protection services and providing general support services, that are able to provide support based on needs including timely forensic tests, response to trauma and psychological counselling.

The recommendation of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention highlights the need to *“set up rape crisis centres and/or sexual violence referral centres that provide immediate medical care, trauma support, forensic examinations and psychological assistance, and, in the interim, to establish a clear pathway for victims of sexual violence/rape, ensure that forensic examinations are carried out swiftly, without the need for a court order, and provide victims with sufficient trauma care, psychological counselling and legal assistance by trained and specialised staff (paragraph 165).”*⁸⁵

Non-governmental organisations providing specialised assistance and support services to victims of violence **need** additional financial and human resources, and training for the existing staff and models of good practice in providing support to survivors of sexual violence, as well as better cooperation with public institutions in preventing and combating sexual violence.

The Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina allocated BAM217,500 within the project *“Strengthening the capacity of institutions to solve gender-based violence in BiH”*, financed by the US Agency for International Development, USAID, for the establishment of pilot crisis centres for victims of rape and

⁸⁵ Recommendation 11 in relation to paragraph 165 of the Committee of the Parties of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul Convention IC-CP/Inf(2022)7, adopted on 6 December 2022, published on 12 December 2022

sexual violence for three health institutions in the Federation of BiH. This provided the initial funds for the adaptation of rooms in gynaecology and obstetrics clinics, the purchase of ultrasound devices, gynaecological tables and other equipment. In accordance with the Agreement and in cooperation with the Hospital Clinic from Barcelona, Medicus Mundi Mediterranea and the Foundation of Local Democracy, in December 2021 the Agency organised training for the staff of crisis centres in which a total of 23 medical doctors and health workers participated. In order to adapt the services of health institutions and centres for social work to the needs of victims of sexual violence, the Agency considers that *it is necessary to have human resources/professionals trained to work with victims of sexual violence, financial support for the establishment of adapted services, research of the needs for the establishment of support services and assistance for victims of sexual violence, as well as models of good practices from other countries for establishing these services.*

In the course of 2021, the **Gender Centre of the Republika Srpska Government** carried out the mapping of existing services for victims of sexual violence in the Republika Srpska, and after that the Protocol on handling cases of sexual violence was prepared, which was adopted at the end of 2021 by the Coordinating Committee for Monitoring the Gender Action Plan in the Republika Srpska. It is not known whether the Protocol has been accepted by the competent public institutions or whether it is operational in practice. The Gender Centre believes that adapting the services of health institutions and centres for social work to the needs of victims of violence requires *human resources/professionals trained to work with victims of sexual violence and financial support for the establishment of customised support and assistance services.*

In the previous three years, the **Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH** did not carry out any activities aimed at improving treatment and specialised support for victims of sexual violence in the Federation of BiH. The Gender Centre believes that adapting the services of health institutions and centres for social work to the needs of victims of violence requires *human resources/professionals trained to work with victims of sexual violence and financial support for the establishment of customised support and assistance services, models of good practice from other countries for support services and strengthening of multi-sectoral cooperation.*

The **Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska** does not have special departments and/or designated police officers or other workers at the level of public security centres or other organisational levels who will ensure access to work that is adapted to the needs of victims of sexual violence.

The **FBiH Ministry of the Interior** does not have special departments and/or designated police officers or other workers at the level of public administrations who will ensure access to work that is adapted to the needs of survivors of sexual violence. The Ministry is working to standardise and improve the response of

police officers and inspectors in cases of domestic violence in accordance with the obligations arising from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The **Police of the Brčko District BiH** has had a police psychologist since 2012 who provides support to victims of violence during preliminary investigation and investigation, attends depositions, and after the indictment is filed, provides support to a court psychologist. The majority of police officers from different organisational units have received training related to domestic violence in relation to their job description, position and rank. The police apply the same operational procedures and carry out investigations related to reports of domestic violence and sexual violence.

In 2021, the **FBiH Ministry of Health** signed an Agreement on Cooperation with the Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to establish crisis centres for victims of rape and sexual violence in the Federation of BiH. It is planned to establish crisis centres in the Tuzla University Clinical Centre, the Mostar University Clinical Hospital and the Abdullah Nakaš General Hospital in Sarajevo. In accordance with the Istanbul Convention, crisis centres will meet all the standards necessary for working with victims of rape and sexual violence, including the support of psychologists, proper collection of forensic evidence, etc. The procedure for dealing with rape victims is prescribed in the annex to the Manual "Clinical Procedures in Cases of Rape", and training according to the Manual is planned for 2022. Introductory education was held in 2021 in cooperation with the Gender Equality Agency of BiH with the participation of international experts, and the second educational training will focus on domestic regulations and protocols according to the framework presented in the Manual. The FBiH Ministry of Health does not have budget funds planned for the establishment, adaptation and support of specialised support and assistance services for victims of sexual violence. The Ministry believes that adapting the services of health institutions to the needs of victims of sexual violence requires *human resources/professionals trained to work with victims of sexual violence and the establishment of protocols on cooperation between health institutions that have established crisis centres to support victims of rape and sexual violence with homes of health.*

In 2022, the **Foundation of Local Democracy** signed an agreement with the BiH Gender Equality Agency on cooperation in opening the first crisis centre for victims of sexual violence in the state hospital Dr Abdullah Nakaš in Sarajevo and providing support to victims through the activities of the Safe House in Sarajevo, for the purposes of further support and rehabilitation of victims of sexual violence. The Foundation has the capacities and resources to work with victims of sexual violence. Since 2002, the Foundation has been

running a shelter for girls who are victims of sexual violence, incest, rape, family and other forms of violence, where it offers care services - accommodation, psychosocial treatment with the aim of detraumatization, resocialisation and rehabilitation. All the employed coordinators are certified for working with victims of violence, the psychologist is a certified therapist.

The **Lara Foundation** is able to provide care to victims of sexual violence at the Safe House in Bijeljina, and provide psychosocial and legal assistance and support in accordance with their needs. Additional staff training, standardised services and financial support are needed to establish customised services and support.

The **United Women Foundation** provides specialised support and assistance to victims of sexual violence through services available to women who have survived gender-based violence, with a focus on domestic violence. It is necessary to further improve services through training of staff to work with victims of sexual violence, financial support for the establishment of customised services, and learning from models of good practice in countries that have established specialised services for victims of sexual violence.

The **Civic Association Budućnost** provides the same type of specialised support and assistance services to victims of sexual violence as it does to victims of domestic violence. The victim is provided with legal and psychosocial support, health supervision, as well as support in proceedings before public institutions. These services can be further improved and strengthened specifically for victims of sexual violence, and this requires training of team members to work with victims of sexual violence and financial support for the establishment of customised support and assistance services.

The **Association Medica** provides psychosocial and legal counselling for victims of sexual violence on its premises and in the field. The organisation runs a unique toll-free telephone line to provide support to survivors of war rape and sexual violence and their family members, and issues a proof of rape in the process of achieving the status of civilian victims of war based on accreditation by the FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The **Association Žena BiH** has the possibility to accommodate survivors of sexual violence in the Safe House and has members of the team trained to work with women who have survived sexual violence. A psychologist and a social worker are additionally trained for psychotherapeutic work with traumatised persons.

5.9 Institutional Coordination Mechanisms and Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations in the Field of Preventing and Combating Gender Based Violence

Institutional mechanisms of coordination and cooperation in preventing and combating gender-based violence are established at the entity, cantonal and local level, and primarily focus on the prevention and combating domestic violence. Coordination mechanisms are established at the state level with partial participation of representatives of governmental institutions at the entity level. This has an impact on the **lack of a uniform systemic approach to response to all forms of gender-based violence**, particularly in the context of the development of public policies that would address harmonised data collection, harmonisation of laws and application of international standards in preventing and combating gender-based violence.

The cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organisations in the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence is based on protocols and cooperation agreements enabling cooperation between the providers of general and specialised assistance and support services to victims of violence and improvement of referral mechanisms at the local level. However, the participation of female representatives of non-governmental organisations in counselling, boards or committees (in which, upon rule, there is only one NGO female representative taking part) is limited, as is the participation/contribution of non-governmental organisations having long-term direct experience in working with women and children victims of gender-based violence throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina in the processes of adopting measures and drafting/amending laws in the fields having a direct impact on the protection of women and children victims of various forms of gender-based violence. Mechanisms for continuous consultation of public institutions and non-governmental organisations are partially established at the state level, within the Action Plan for strengthening the cooperation of non-governmental organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina with institutional and non-institutional partners, which was prepared by the BiH Gender Equality Agency with the participation of non-governmental organisations in the course of 2021. The Action Plan contains the activities planned for improving the financing of safe houses for victims of violence in BiH.

The new **General Protocol on handling the cases of domestic violence**⁸⁶ came into force in the **Republika Srpska** in 2022, which contains the procedure for protection services, who, in accordance with provisions of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Republika Srpska, provide protection, support and assistance to victims of domestic violence, regardless of whether proceedings were initiated against the perpetrator of violence, the forms and manner of cooperation and exchange of necessary data and information between protection services, actions of the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republika Srpska, as the ministry responsible for supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and the final provisions which prescribe the conduct of protection services in accordance with the activities of the Protocol. The Protocol refers to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012, establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. In 2013, the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence established the **Council for combating domestic violence in the Republika Srpska**, which includes representatives of the ministries that supervise the work of public institutions that are recognised as services for protection from domestic violence and one female representative of non-governmental organisations (United Women Foundation).

In the Federation of BiH, treatment protocols are concluded at the cantonal and municipal level, and part of the protocols are mechanisms for referring victims of violence to other institutions in the protection system. The signatories of these protocols are public institutions, including institutes providing free legal aid and non-governmental organisations that provide specialised assistance and support to victims of violence.

In the Brčko District BiH, the 2018 **Protocol on cooperation and handling the cases of violence against women and domestic violence** is in force, which defines the steps in actions of police officers and other protection services. The procedure and roles of protection services in terms of mechanisms for referring victims of violence to other institutions in the protection system are partly regulated by the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Brčko District BiH, while risk assessment and who performs the assessment is prescribed by the **Rulebook on the method of implementing emergency and protective measures under the jurisdiction of the Brčko District Police. The Protocol on cooperation in the field of providing support to witnesses, between the Police and the Prosecutor's**

⁸⁶ The General Protocol on handling the cases of domestic violence in the Republika Srpska, Official Gazette RS, 14/22

Office of the Brčko District BiH from 2013, defines in more detail the role, procedure and way of providing support to witnesses in preliminary investigation and investigation by the police psychologist, i.e., the associate providing support to witnesses, in accordance with regulations and job description. After the indictment is issued, professional support is provided by the psychologist of the Basic Court, and other public institutions in the area of Brčko District BiH are involved in order to protect the victim

The **BiH Gender Equality Agency** holds regular meetings with non-governmental organisations with the aim of exchanging information and planning joint activities and it developed a draft Action Plan to strengthen cooperation between the Agency and non-governmental organisations. An **agreement** was signed **with the BiH Safe Network for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention** in 2015, and an **agreement** was signed **with the Women's Network BiH** in 2020. Representatives of non-governmental organisations take part in the work of the *Committee for Monitoring and Reporting on the Istanbul Convention and Femicide* and *the Coordination Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in BiH for the period 2018-2022*.

The **Gender Centre of the Republika Srpska Government**, in accordance with its mandate, cooperates with non-governmental organisations engaged in the protection of human rights and freedoms and provides professional and advisory support and assistance to all system institutions and other partners. Depending on the activity, memoranda of cooperation and understanding are signed with local and international organisations and institutions, mostly with a focus on a specific mission and agreed programme and project activities. When drafting public policy documents and preparing reports based on assumed obligations, the Gender Centre seeks information and experiences of non-governmental organisations, representatives of non-governmental organisations are involved in lectures and training sessions conducted by the Gender Centre, and through the Financial Instrument for the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan in BiH (FIGAP) supports the projects of non-governmental organisations through public calls, among other things, in the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence.

The **Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH** through the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy for preventing and combating domestic violence of the Federation of BiH, it also includes representatives of non-governmental organisations, safe houses, and other beneficiary associations of multiple marginalised groups, such as persons with disabilities and associations of the Roma national minority. Through multi-sectoral education, in addition to services of protection from

domestic violence and violence against women, the field of work of specialised non-governmental organisations is also covered. As part of operations of the SOS hotline 1265 to help victims of violence, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH and non-governmental organisations - the Foundation of Local Democracy from Sarajevo, the Civic Association Viva Women from Tuzla, the Association of Women from Una from Bihać, the Civic Association Medica from Zenica and the Women's Association Žena BiH from Mostar.

The **Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska** has continuous cooperation with non-governmental organisations carried out through the organisation and participation in seminars, round tables, meetings of services of protection from domestic violence, programmes of non-governmental organisations, and engagement of the MoI RS Women's Network⁸⁷ in projects related to gender-based violence.

The **FBiH Ministry of the Interior** signed a memorandum of understanding with UN Women and has institutional coordination and cooperation with centres for social work and non-governmental organisations that are in charge of placing victims of violence in safe houses.

The **Foundation of Local Democracy** from Sarajevo is a signatory to the Joint Protocol on Cooperation on the Prevention and **Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence in the Sarajevo Canton**, together with six cantonal ministries and the Association of Persons with Disabilities. The Foundation coordinates the work of the **Safe Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina**, which includes 22 civil society organisations in BiH dedicated to combating gender-based violence. The BiH Safe Network signed an **Agreement on cooperation with the BiH Gender Equality Agency on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)**.

The **Lara Foundation** from Bijeljina signed protocols and/or agreements/memorandums on cooperation with a number of institutions. Part of the cooperation is defined by protocols on handling the cases of domestic violence, which were signed at the level of local self-government units. In addition, agreements on cooperation in caring for victims of domestic violence are signed with centres for social work. For the implementation of activities in most projects, the Lara Foundation signs cooperation agreements with targeted institutions that are time-bound for the duration of the project. The current

⁸⁷ More about the MoI RS Women's Network at: <http://www.mrezazena-muprs.org/>

protocols/agreements include the following: protocols on dealing with cases of domestic violence in the municipalities of Bijeljina, Ugljevik, Lopare and Vlasenica (in the signing phase), Protocol on understanding and cooperation between the Bijeljina Health Centre - Centre for Mental Health Protection and the Lara Foundation, Memorandum of Cooperation with the BiH Gender Equality Agency, Protocol on mutual cooperation of institutions and non-governmental organisations in providing support to survivors and survivors/witnesses in war crimes cases, sexual violence and other crimes of gender-based violence in the region covered by the District Court and the District Public Prosecutor's Office in Bijeljina, Memorandum of Cooperation between the Lara Foundation and the Ombudsman for Children of the Republika Srpska, agreements on cooperation and joint action between the Lara Foundation and the municipalities of Lopare and Ugljevik on effective protection of victims of domestic violence and protection of victims of violence in intimate partner relationships, and the same agreements are prepared with the Municipality of Sokolac and the City of Zvornik.

The **Civic Association Budućnost** from Modriča participates in protocols on the cooperation of protection services in preventing and combating domestic violence and gender-based violence at the level of local communities. The organisation participates in networks that bring together service providers, such as the Network for Coordination of Governmental and Non-Governmental Providers of Free Legal Aid in BiH, Safe Network of BiH, Women's Network of BiH, RING Network of Non-Governmental Organisations Against Human Trafficking in BiH, as well as in regular meetings of coordinating bodies and local expert teams and the development of individual support plans for survivors of violence.

The **Association Medica** from Zenica is a signatory of the Protocol on cooperation in providing protection, support, assistance and care for victims of domestic and community violence and the prevention of violence in the Zenica-Doboj Canton and the Agreement on cooperation for sheltering the victims of human trafficking with the BiH Ministry of Security. Medica is recognised as a reference organisation for issues of trauma and violence, and has established and formalised cooperation with 193 governmental institutions and non-governmental organisations through 33 protocols. Medica established referral mechanisms to combat domestic and community violence in the municipality of Zenica and the Zenica-Doboj Canton, which became an example of good practice and which the Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH recognised and transferred to the Una-Sana Canton, Mostar, Goražde and Ustikolina.

5.10 Protection and Support to Survivors of Gender Based Violence During Emergency Situations, Including the Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted **numerous challenges in achieving protection and support for women victims of gender-based violence**. The measures adopted by crisis management committees in BiH from the declaration of emergency situation **were not gender sensitive, did not ensure efficient protection or support adapted to the needs of women subjected to violence, or were adopted with a delay**, causing difficulties in working with women and children in the state of need.

The organisations providing specialised assistance and support services to victims of violence via SOS hotlines and safe houses pointed to an **increased number of SOS calls and requests for transfer into safe houses during restriction measures**⁸⁸, and stated that the restriction of movement as a measure of response to the pandemic for many women meant a direct threat from intensified violence they were subjected to from their marital/extramarital partners and inability to seek help and support. The women who survived violence and started an independent life faced the lack of basic means of sustenance, many lost their job and were given unpaid leave. Specialised support and assistance for women who survived gender-based violence was organised in accordance with the possibilities and available resources of non-governmental organisations. Some organisations running safe houses reported on the inability to ensure space for isolation during a stay in the safe house. Work in shifts was organised and new forms of support were introduced for women through *online* counselling and additional hotlines for crisis support.

Public institutions operated at lower capacity and reduced the number of their field interventions. **Difficulties were observed in the pronouncement of urgent and protective measures for the purpose of protecting the victims of domestic violence**, because courts operated under extraordinary circumstances and as a priority, prosecuted

⁸⁸ The United Women Foundation registered 116 SOS calls in April 2020, which was by 10% more than in March 2020. SOS counsellors registered an increase in violence especially in the second half of the month. In relation to 2019, the CA Viva Women reported a 20% increase in SOS calls and requests for safe house placement in April, May and June of 2020. The Association Medica registered a 40% increase in SOS calls during restriction measures. "Multi-sectoral (non) response to violence against women during the pandemic", 2021, Medica Zenica and United Women Foundation

the cases related to the breach of the government's measures during the emergency situation/pandemic.

In April 2020, the **BiH Gender Equality Agency** sent **Recommendations for Incorporating the Gender Equality Perspective in Combating the Covid-19 Pandemic**⁸⁹ to governmental institutions at the state, entity and Brčko District level, including a response to gender-based violence with the following measures:

- Finding the necessary capacities for an unhindered, prompt, and effective response by the police to reports of domestic violence and gender-based violence, as well as supervision over the implementation of protective measures against perpetrators of violence;
- That the procedures for treatment in safe houses be simplified in such a way that female employees of safe houses are trained to fill out the sanitary questionnaire for accommodation in a safe house alone with the victims, as well as to be equipped with the necessary protective equipment and the safe houses with accommodation facilities for the purposes of isolation;
- That competent ministries in the emergency period allocate funds to safe houses without announcing calls, that is, that support to non-governmental organisations be provided through the immediate realisation of funds to support accommodation in safe houses;
- That all levels of government implement risk management measures that would include the police, judiciary and health care, in order to ensure a coordinated response to the increased risk of gender-based violence;
- That the collection of data on violence against women be harmonised between all levels of government in BiH, which would enable the phenomenon of increased risk of violence during the pandemic and other crisis situations to be adequately monitored, in order to facilitate an adequate response.

In March 2021, based on the assessment of impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the institutional response to gender-based violence in the Republika Srpska, the **Gender Centre of the Republika Srpska Government** prepared an **Action Plan for actions of protection services in cases of gender-based**

⁸⁹ Recommendations available at: <https://arsbih.gov.ba/preporuke-za-integrisanje-perspektive-ravnopravnosti-spolova-u-borbi-protiv-pandemije-covid-19/>

violence during the pandemic/state of emergency in the Republika Srpska. The priority goal of the Action Plan was to harmonise the actions of protection and support services in the early recognition, reporting and processing of cases of domestic violence with specifics of the actions of protection services in an emergency situation/pandemic, in order to provide adequate protection and support to victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence. Four special measures to achieve the priority goal were defined, as follows:

- _ Harmonisation of the process of early recognition, reporting and processing of cases of domestic violence with the specifics of managing the protection services in an emergency situation;
- _ Ensuring accessibility of specific protection and support services in pandemic conditions;
- _ Improving multi-sectoral cooperation, with a special emphasis on improving institutional cooperation during the pandemic;
- _ Strengthening professional competencies and providing professional support to employees in protection entities, with a special emphasis on the development of skills and techniques in working with victims of violence during the pandemic.

In November 2020, the **Emergency Management Committee of the Republika Srpska** (9 months after the state of emergency was declared) issued a Conclusion that tasked the **Public Health Institute of the Republika Srpska** and competent centres for social work at the level of local communities to provide free Covid 19 testing to victims of domestic violence on placement in safe houses in the Republika Srpska.⁹⁰

In early April 2020, the **Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH**, with cooperation and support from the **FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** launched activities that were supposed to facilitate the procedure of admitting victims of violence in safe houses in the Federation of BiH. The Ministry, in cooperation with the **FBiH Civil Protection Administration** and **FBiH Ministry of Health**, launched activities to train the employees of safe houses in the Federation of BiH to fill out a sanitary questionnaire when receiving victims of domestic violence, as well as provide medical protective equipment and resources.

⁹⁰ Free testing for victims of domestic violence, Radio and Television of the Republika Srpska: <https://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=411259>

The **Foundation of Local Democracy** participated in the preparation of recommendations and guidelines for action in order to enable survivors of gender-based violence to have unhindered access to support and protection services from violence during crisis situations. In cooperation with member organisations of the BiH Safe Network, which run safe houses in BiH, the Foundation conducted an **“Analysis of the impact of Covid 19 on specialised support services for women victims of domestic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina”** and prepared a policy proposal **“Operation and financing of safe houses in BiH during the Covid-19 pandemic”**.

The analysis and policy proposal established **recommendations for responding to gender-based violence in crisis situations, including Covid 19**, as follows:

- Formation of intervention funds that should be available to non-governmental organisations providing specialised support services in emergency situations. At the level of the Republika Srpska, the establishment of a special intervention fund for emergency situations to help safe houses in crisis situations, with the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republika Srpska with a special purpose to support safe houses in the Republika Srpska during emergencies;
- Continuous lobbying and cooperation with local authorities, with the aim of including the costs of operating safe houses in the budgets of all local communities in the RS. Planning of annual funds for crisis situations at the level of local communities in the amount of participation costs for one beneficiary of the safe house during the period of 6 months of stay in the safe house;
- In the Federation of BiH, the creation of an intervention fund within the budget of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with a special purpose for supporting safe houses in the Federation of BiH during emergencies. Allocation of reserve intervention funds in all cantons of the Federation of BiH, within the budgets of the cantonal ministries for labour and social policy, in the amount of participation costs for three safe house beneficiaries during the period of 6 months of stay in the safe house;
- Establishing a coordination group at the level of the BiH Safe Network for response in case of crises and emergency situations;
- Establishment of mandatory cooperation of emergency management committees with non-governmental organisations in emergencies;

In cooperation with the **United Women Foundation**, in 2021 the **Medica Association** conducted **research on the multi-sectoral response to violence against women in BiH during the Covid-19** pandemic, with recommendations for improving the protection and care of victims of violence in emergencies defined by sector resource actors. The recommendations are aimed at continuous gender-sensitive protection, assistance, support and care for victims of violence with clear guidelines in handling and information thereof, strengthening the capacity of actors of sectoral resources individually and organisationally, application of internationally legally binding documents, laws, strategies, policies in protection and prevention of gender-based violence based on the principle of gender sensitivity.⁹¹

⁹¹ S. Husić, N. Golubović - research "Multi-sectoral (non)response to violence against women during the pandemic in BiH", 2021 Association Medica Zenica

