FROM FORMAL OBLIGATION TO ACTUAL PROGRESS

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

Monitoring the situation

2022-2023

udruZene Žene Banjaluka, BiH

KVINNA KVINNA

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FROM FORMAL OBLIGATION TO ACTUAL PROGRESS

RESPONSE TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

MONITORING THE SITUATION
2022-2023

FOUNDATION UNITED WOMEN BANJA LUKA
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1

Introduction

The Foundation United Women, within the project **"Preventing and Combating Gender Based Violence in the Process of EU Integrations of Bosnia and Herzegovina",** supported by Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation from Sweden, launched an initiative of continuous and independent monitoring of the situation in the field of prevention and suppression of gender-based violence against women.

Monitoring aims to indicate the state, challenges and progress in this area, as well as to establish priorities for public advocacy and action by public institutions, civil society organizations and international organizations, in the context of fulfilling 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).** Monitoring also points to aspects of the European Union's determination to regulate the area of gender-based violence against women, which are important and relevant for Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the process of joining the European Union.

Initial report[1], covering the period 2019-2021, was published in 2022 and focuses on the situation in eight (8) key areas:

- Framework of laws and public policies;
- Collection of data on gender-based violence against women and girls;
- Prevention of gender-based violence (including raising awareness and training of professionals);
- Access to general support services for women survivors of gender-based violence;
- Provision of specialized support and assistance services for women survivors of gender-based violence; (including support from public budgets to civil society organizations that provide support to women who have survived violence);
- Institutional coordination mechanisms and cooperation with civil society organizations in the field of prevention and suppression of gender-based violence;
- Specialized 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 report before you presents an analysis of the situation for the period 2022-2023, based on collected and available data during 2023, and following the methodology established in the initial report for the period 2019-2021. It was prepared on the basis of data collected by monitoring the work of government institutions in

[1] From Formal Obligation to Actual progress – Response to Gender Based Violence Against Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina", Monitoring the Situation – Baseline Report 2019-2022, The Foundation United Women, 2022, Available at: https://udruzene-zene.org/publikacije/rodno-zasnovano-nasilje/od-formalne-obaveze-do-stvarnog-napretka/

Bosnia and Herzegovina at the state, entity and Brčko District levels through desk research, data collection through questionnaires, as well as data and research conducted by civil society organizations active in the field of prevention and suppression of gender-based violence against women and girls, with a focus on organizations providing specialized support and assistance to survivors of violence.

Where relevant, the report relies on examples of the actions of public institutions and civil society organizations in response to gender-based violence against women, with the intention of documenting problems and good practices, and supporting public advocacy activities aimed at implementing binding international standards in this area.

2

Context of International Obligations in the Field of Prevention and Suppression of Gender Based Violence against Women

2.1 The European Commission calls on Bosnia and Herzegovina to align its legislation with international standards

In December 2022, Bosnia and Herzegovina received candidate status for membership in the European Union. The opening of accession negotiations is conditioned by the fulfillment of **14 key priorities from the Opinion on the Application of Bosnia and Herzegovina**[2], adopted by the European Commission in May 2019, which remained relevant until today.

The Opinion presents a comprehensive road map for radical reforms in the areas of democracy, rule of law, fundamental rights, and public administration reform. **Strengthening the protection of the rights of all citizens through the implementation of legislation on non-discrimination and gender equality is one of the key priorities.**

Report of the European Commission for Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2023, within **Chapter 23: Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, addresses issues of gender-based violence and domestic violence**. A clear recommendation was sent to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to **"harmonize and improve the legislation against domestic violence and gender-based violence in order to bring it in line with international standards, as well as harmonize laws across the country with the Law on Gender Equality in the direction of increasing the participation of women in public and political life " in the next year.** Systemic deficiencies in the institutional response to gender-based violence were observed. The report calls on the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to urgently change the legislation in order to harmonize it with the Istanbul Convention, calls for changes in the entity legislation that addresses gender-based violence and domestic violence, the establishment of an effective monitoring and accountability mechanism and improvement of data collection in this area in order to use them for development of public policies. The need for progress in the prosecution of criminal acts of sexual violence and the provision of access to compensation for war crimes victims, as well as the provision of witness protection, was emphasized again.

In June 2023, The European Union ratified the Istanbul Convention[3], thereby committing to the application of standards in the direction of preventing and fighting violence against women and domestic violence, and accepted the monitoring mechanisms by GREVIO. The ratification entered into force on October 1, 2023.

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2 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, {SWD(2019) 222 final}: Available in English language at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/20190529-bosnia-and-herzegovina-opinion.pdf (accessed on 17.06.2023)

3 Newsroom: "The European Union Deposited the Instrument of Approval of the "Istanbul Convention", Council of Europe, 28.06.2023., (English language): https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/the-european-union-deposited-the-instrument-of-approval-of-the-istanbul-convention- (accessed on 14.07.2023.)

3

Key Monitoring Findings

At the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Gender Action Plan for the period 2023-2027 was adopted, which recognizes the prevention and suppression of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and human trafficking, as a priority area. Within Strategic Goal 1: Development, implementation, and monitoring of a program of measures to improve gender equality in government institutions, by priority areas, BiH GAP recognizes as in I.1. Prevention and suppression of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and human trafficking.

Criminal law protection against sexual harassment and protection against the misuse of photos and videos of sexually explicit content in the Republic of Srpska has been improved, whereby the provisions of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Srpska are additionally harmonized with the binding standards of the Istanbul Convention**.** In addition, Republic of Srpska initiated the drafting of a **new Law on protection against domestic violence and violence against women,** which, among other things, seeks to define femicide as a serious violation of women's human rights in terms of its prevention, introduces a definition of violence against women and regulates the rights of victims on protection and support in detail.

Although in the previous period**, steps were taken towards harmonizing the law with provisions of the Istanbul Convention in the Federation of BiH**, and the adoption of the Strategy for Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, these processes are slow and publicly non-transparent. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has adopted a **policy of zero tolerance towards acts of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment in federal administrative bodies, federal administrative organizations, services, and other bodies founded by the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.**

Bosnia and Herzegovina still does not have an established common database on all forms of violence against women and domestic violence at the state level. The lack of a clear methodology, as well as legal, administrative, and political obstacles to the establishment of a unified system for data collection and analysis, was registered. The collection and analysis of data on various forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, as well as the collection of data according to the parameters recommended by the Committee for Monitoring the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) is incomplete and inconsistent. Current criminal laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not harmonized in the direction of recognition of criminal offences of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention. As a result, system data is not collected for criminal offences of violence against women that are not yet recognized by law.

Public institutions in Republic of Srpska only partially collect data on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence in relation to binding international recommendations. Only for the

criminal offence of domestic violence it is possible to track data on disability and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Data on the age of the victim and the perpetrator are collected for only some of the offences that are recognized as violence against women. Data on the ethnicity of the victim and the perpetrator are not recorded. Data on the number of violated measures and imposed sanctions due to violation of measures, as well as the number of cases in which a woman was exposed to re-victimization or murder despite those measures, in accordance with the recommendation of GREVIO in the context of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, are not available within these records. Systemic data on various forms of violence against women and domestic violence to which multiple vulnerable groups of women are exposed, such as women with disabilities, women from rural areas, Roma women and other categories, are only partially collected and recorded.

Collected data in the Federation of BiH from nine (9) cantonal ministries of interior affairs indicate the absence of a single and consistent methodology in collecting and recording data on cases of violence against women in the context of compliance with the binding recommendations of GREVIO and the CEDAW Committee. The data are not comparable, and it is not possible to present them in an aggregate manner. The records have been improved through the inclusion of a data column on the disability of the victim and the perpetrator of violence in the questionnaires submitted to the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the collection of these parameters is not consistent. Data on the ethnicity of the victim and the perpetrator are still not collected, which is a recommendation of the CEDAW Committee addressed to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of data collection on all forms of violence against women.

There were no changes registered in the approach and determination of public institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of preventing all forms of gender-based violence against women. There is still a lack of strategic determination and continuous implementation of measures, including campaigns that were created in such a way as to indicate the gendered nature of violence against women, directed at raising the awareness of the general population and professionals in the chain of protection against violence, about the causes and consequences of various forms of violence against women, overcoming patriarchal and stereotypical attitudes towards women, and which pay special attention to marginalized groups of women and the intersectional discrimination they are exposed to in relation to the violence they have survived.

Campaigns are still primarily carried out by organs and bodies that are recognized as institutional mechanisms for gender equality, while other institutions and ministries are involved to a limited extent, most often through the marking of international dates in the field of gender-based violence and the protection of women's human rights. **Information about available general services and procedures related to support and protection**

measures is limited and, as a rule, without clearly presented steps that enable women exposed to violence to seek help and protection.

Civil society organizations in the field of women's human rights protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina are committed to responding to cases of violence against women and continuously act through public actions to advocate for an adequate systemic response in the direction of preventing and suppressing violence, which includes prevention of violence, protection of victims, consistent prosecution of perpetrators of violence and integrated policies and laws that are aligned with the binding international standards of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention.

During the observed period, **through public protests, civil society organizations, as well as citizens throughout BiH, communicated requests to the police, prosecutor's offices and courts** in the direction of ensuring the protection of victims of violence and the urgency of action, initiation of disciplinary proceedings against responsible persons in case of failure to provide the necessary protection , enabling the necessary support for victims of violence in criminal proceedings against the perpetrator, access to support and protection services for victims of violence and stricter punishments for perpetrators of violence. The demands sent to the legislative bodies in Bosnia and Herzegovina are aimed at recognizing the gender-motivated murder of a woman - femicide - as a separate criminal offence, recognizing children as victims of domestic violence, monitoring cases through a single database, introducing sanctions for inaction for all officials of institutions who in their actions failed to take measures to protect victims and prevent violence, tighten the control of issuing permits for the possession of weapons and regulate the obligation of regular training, from the budget funds, of all representatives of institutions responsible for preventing and suppressing violence.

Continuity was registered in the implementation of institutionally integrated trainings of professionals in the system of protection against violence. However, there is still a lack of a structured assessment of the impact of these trainings of professionals in public institutions that are recognized as protection entities in response to violence against women, on their actions in providing support to victims of violence, with clear indicators of progress. **The existing evaluations are directed at identifying obstacles in the actions of institutions and recommendations for further action, rather than collecting and analyzing feedback on how the training contributed to providing protection and support to victims of violence and responding to cases of violence in practice.**

An important segment of focus in the trainings of professionals, conducted by civil society organizations, **is the work on changing attitudes by overcoming gender prejudices and stereotypes, while transferring experiences in direct work with survivors,** which contributes to a sensitized approach in working with women and children, who are recognized as the most numerous victims of violence. However, **the continuity of**

training conducted by non-governmental organizations depends on project planning, available financial resources through the support of international donors and cooperation with public institutions.

No changes have been registered in the direction of **the introduction of the legal obligation of all law enforcement officials and professionals who provide general support services** to inform women who have survived various forms of gender-based violence about their rights and available services within protection entities.

Institutions in BiH apply **different models of financing the care of victims of domestic violence in safe houses, while specialized services are provided to women victims of violence who do not stay in safe houses based on the support of international donors**, including support to women victims of other forms of gender-based violence.

Sustainable exit strategies and support for women survivors of violence through economic empowerment, financial support, employment support and social housing almost entirely depend on programs implemented by non-governmental organizations, with very limited support from government institutions/public budget funds.

Non-governmental organizations continue to **develop specialized support and assistance services, including addressing access to these services by women belonging to marginalized groups.** Available services include support in care and recovery from violence through safe houses, free legal aid and counseling, psychosocial support, escort and support from a trusted person, economic empowerment activities and support in exit strategies from violence. **The majority of organizations do not have the possibility of free representation in court and only one organization implements continuous work programs with perpetrators of gender-based violence.**

The improvement of services is visible through **the establishment and development of new models of support** - the support of a trusted person, self-help groups, the establishment of a network of female helpers - 4P, the establishment of an SOS application and the provision of free online legal support for victims of violence, as well as the continuity in the development of information tools and resources victims of violence about their rights and available support.

Access to safe houses and counseling centers of organizations for women with disabilities remains limited due to lack of technical equipment, architectural barriers, and limited training of staff to provide support to persons with hearing or speech impairment, due to lack of knowledge of sign language. Organizations are making efforts to make access to specialized services available for Roma and women from rural areas, through the engagement of support persons and field visits.

The development of specialized services for victims of sexual violence includes the cooperation of organizations through the preparation of resource materials and staff training for working with women and children who have survived violence.

Examples of good practice at the local and cantonal level were registered in efforts of strengthening the coordination and cooperation of institutions and civil society organizations through capacity building, cooperation on the institutionalization of training modules and the provision of services to women who survived violence.

Activities are continued to **establish support mechanisms for victims of sexual violence** through the development of protocols and tools that serve professionals, public institutions and civil society organizations that provide support to victims of sexual violence.

In addition to the already established three crisis centers for victims of sexual violence at health institutions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the training of health workers in these institutions, **no additional crisis centers for victims of sexual violence have been established in other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina**, which limits the availability of specialized support and assistance to women exposed to sexual violence throughout the country.

4

Recommendations for Action

In addition to the recommendations for the areas covered by the monitoring of the systemic response to gender-based violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are defined in the Baseline Monitoring Report[4], and which remain relevant for the observed period, the following recommendations are added:

4.1 Framework of Laws and Public Policies

- Ensure **the transparency of the process of preparation and adoption of laws and public policies in the field of prevention and suppression of gender-based violence against women**, by the relevant ministries and public institutions at the state, entity and Brčko District levels, as well as clear and continuous consultation mechanisms with civil society organizations which contribute to the prevention and suppression of gender-based violence against women in BiH through their inclusion in working groups for drafting laws and policies, as well as consultation meetings on a regular basis.

4.2 Collection of Data on Gender Based Violence Against Women

- To improve the **collection of data on gender-based violence against women by public institutions** at the entity and Brčko District level of B&H, through the collection of data on the number of violated emergency protection measures and protective measures issued in cases of violence in the family or family community and the sanctions issued for violating the measures, as well as the number of cases in which the woman was exposed to re-victimization or murder despite those measures, in accordance with the recommendation of GREVIO in the context of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention;
- Establish **clear methodologies by public institutions** at the state, entity, and Brčko District levels in the direction of **collecting, recording, and analyzing systemic data on various forms of violence against women and domestic violence to which multiple vulnerable groups of women are exposed**, such as women with disabilities, women from rural area, Roma women and other categories, and make this data publicly available on a regular basis;
- Support **continuous research and the implementation of population surveys on gender-based forms of violence against women in BiH by planning and allocating funds from public budgets at the state, entity, and Brčko District levels of BiH** in order to enable monitoring of the situation in the area, as well as the planning and implementation of systemic prevention measures and

[4] „From formal obligation to actual progress: Response to gender-based violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monitoring the situation - baseline report (2019.-2022.), pages. 15-19. Foundation United Women, 2022, available at: https://udruzene-zene.org/publikacije/rodno-zasnovano-nasilje/od-formalne-obaveze-do-stvarnog-napretka/ (accessed on 17.10.2023.)

suppression of violence, based on perceived shortcomings and needs of women who are exposed to violence. Research and surveys should particularly cover the areas covered by the recommendations of GREVIO and the CEDAW Committee and funds from public budgets available through public calls and civil society organizations that can contribute to the collection and analysis of data.

5

Analysis by Areas

5.1 Framework of Laws and Public Policies

Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023-2027 was adopted, and recognizes the prevention and suppression of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and human trafficking, as a priority area.

In October 2023, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the B&H Gender Action Plan for the period 2023-2027 (GAP B&H)[5]. Within Strategic Objective 1: Development, implementation, and monitoring of a program of measures to improve gender equality in government institutions, by priority areas, GAP BiH recognizes **I.1. Prevention and suppression of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and human trafficking.** The activities foreseen in the Operational Plan for the implementation of the GAP 2023-2027 in the direction of the implementation of measures to introduce and apply international and domestic standards for gender equality as obligations that directly or indirectly regulate this area include the following:

- Development of an activity plan for the implementation of the Recommendations of the Committee of Signatories of the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe and GREVIO, in accordance with jurisdictions (2023);
- Adoption of by-laws for the Law on the Prohibition of Domestic Violence in Brčko District (2023);
- Drafting of the Law on the Rights of Torture Victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina (including the definition of witnesses) (2027);
- Preparation of the analysis and initiation of the initiative to harmonize the Criminal Code of Brčko District with the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of BiH, if there is a need (2024);
- Preparation of compliance analysis and initiation of amendments to the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to harmonize it with the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2024);
- Criminalization of sexual harassment in the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its harmonization with the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2026);
- Amendments to the Criminal Code of BIH in order to include cyber violence with an international element (2026);
- Conducting an analysis of criminal laws regarding hate crimes against LGBTI persons (2026).

[5] Decision on adoption of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Gender Action Plan for the period 2023 – 2027, with the Operational Plan of Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Implementation of the BiH GAP 2023-2027, BiH Official Gazette, no. 82/23. Direct link: http://www.sluzbenilist.ba/page/akt/1qYqiACer0I= (accessed on 23.10.2023.)

The institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brčko District are responsible for implementing the planned activities.

Republic of Srpska: Legal and incriminating protection against sexual harassment has been improved

With **amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Srpska** in August 2023, formal legal protection against sexual violence and harassment was improved.

The criminal offence of **Sexual Harassment** (Art. 170 of the RS Criminal Code) now provides prosecution by official duty and not at the suggestion of the injured party. The basic form of the offense was introduced, which criminalizes sexual harassment against any person and foresees a fine or a prison sentence of up to one year. The amendments provide for two qualified forms of this offense - when the victim is in a position of subordination or dependence towards the perpetrator, or is particularly vulnerable due to age, illness, disability, addiction, pregnancy, severe physical or mental disability, with a threatened prison sentence of up to two years, and when sexual harassment is committed using a computer network or some other form of communication, with a threatened prison sentence of six months to three years.

The new criminal offense is **Abuse of Photographs and Videos of Sexually Explicit Content** (Art. 170a of the RS Criminal Code), which criminalizes abuse of trust and making a photograph or video of sexually explicit content available to a third party without the consent of another person.

With the amendments, the protection against sexual harassment in the Republic of Srpska was aligned with the obligations from the Istanbul Convention, which requires member states "to take the necessary legislative and other measures to ensure that any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating dignity of persons, especially when creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive environment, is subject to criminal or other legal punishment"[6]. Although the Istanbul Convention does not directly regulate violence in the online space, **GREVIO General Recommendation no. 1 on the Digital Dimension of Violence Against Women (2021)** calls on member states, in the context of prevention, to "consider revising all relevant existing laws, and adopt new laws where necessary, in order to prevent digital violence and ensure the protection and prosecution of the digital

6 Article 40 of the Istanbul Convention

dimension of violence against women, against standards of the Istanbul Convention and other relevant standards...". [7]

Republic of Srpska: Measures taken to improve protection against domestic violence and violence against women

In October 2023, the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska adopted the **Draft Law on protection against domestic violence and violence against women**[8]. The law proposes the following key changes - it introduces the definitions of violence against women (Art. 5) and femicide (Art. 6), and defines the catalog of rights of victims of violence against women and domestic violence, that are realized through this and other laws (Art. 12). Emergency protection measures - removal from an apartment, house or other residential space, and a ban on approaching, disturbing, or communicating with a victim of violence - are imposed by order of a police officer within the period of 48 hours, and can be extended by the responsible court for a maximum of 30 days. The victim can be accommodated in a safe house at her/his own request, and the accommodation does not depend on the decision of the center for social work. The center for social work, in cooperation with the organization that runs the safe house, prepares an individual support plan for each victim. It is defined what this plan should contain and that its preparation is mandatory preparation. The functioning and operation of the SOS helpline is defined, and funding is ensured from the budget of the Republic of Srpska. Safe houses for victims of violence are financed from the budget of Republic of Srpska in the amount of 100% of the costs.

After the adoption of the draft, the Government of Republic of Srpska formed a working group for drafting the proposal of the Law. During the preparation of this report, the law was still not adopted.

Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Measures taken in the direction of harmonizing the Criminal Code and the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence with the Istanbul Convention and the adoption of the Strategy for Combating Domestic Violence of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a conclusion[9] in September 2023, in which it supported the activities of the Federal Ministry of Justice in the

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7 GREVIO General Recommendation no. 1 on Digital Dimension of Violence Against Women, adopted on 20.10.2021. Direct link (in English language): https://rm.coe.int/grevio-rec-no-on-digital-violence-against-women/1680a49147 (accessed on 17.10.2023.)

8 Republic of Srpska Draft Law on Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, National Assembly of Republic of Srpska, 13.10.2023, available at: https://shorturl.at/eLOSU (accessed 24.10.2023.)

9 Point 16, Minutes from the 5th regular meeting of the House of Representatives of the FBIH Parliament, held on 27.09.2023, No: 01-02-2273/23, Sarajevo, 02.10.2023

direction of the formation of a working group for the drafting of the Draft Law on Protection from Domestic Violence. The conclusion suggested that the preparation of the Proposal for the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and the amendment of the Criminal Code in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be considered at the same time, in order to arrive at a more adequate legal framework through which the victim of violence will be protected in accordance with the Istanbul Convention and the criminal policy of perpetrators of violence will be tightened. The Parliament obliged the Federal Ministry of Justice to submit the Draft Law on Protection from Domestic Violence to the parliamentary procedure within 90 days, as well as Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Federation of BiH. The Ministry of Justice of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has formed a working group in which, in addition to representatives of public institutions, a representative of the Safe Network[10] of Bosnia and Herzegovina also participated. During the preparation of this report, the laws were not submitted to parliamentary procedure. In December 2023, the Government of the Federation of BiH adopted a conclusion on the adoption of the proposal of the Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence 2024-2027[11], and tasked the General Secretariat of the Government of FBiH to submit it to the Parliament of FBiH for consideration and adoption.

Although steps have been taken towards harmonizing the law with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the adoption of the Strategy for Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, these processes are slow and publicly non-transparent.

FB&H: Adopted the policy of zero tolerance towards acts of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment in federal administrative bodies, federal administrative organizations, services, and other bodies founded by the Government of the Federation of BiH

In December 2022, the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the decision on the adoption of the **Policy of zero tolerance towards acts of sexual harassment and harassment based on gender[12]**. The policy defines the framework measures that federal administrative bodies are obliged to take in

10 News: "Kratina: We cannot be satisfied with solutions for protection of violence victims, the deadline is coming...", Faktor.ba, 19.12.2023. https://www.faktor.ba/vijest/kratina-ne-mozemo-biti-zadovoljni-rjesavanjem-problema-zastite-zrtava-nasilja-istjece-rok/219350 (accessed on 24.12.2023.)

11 Adoption of the Strategy for prevention and combating domestic violence 2024-2027, Government of FBIH, 21.12.2023. https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/hr/donosenje-strategije-za-prevenciju-i-borbu-protiv-nasilja-u-porodici-2024-2027-godina (accessed on 25.12.2023.)

12 Policy of zero tolerance for the acts of sexual harassment and harassment based on gender, Government of FBiH, 15.12.2022. Available at: https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bs/853-odluka-o-politici-nulte-tolerancije-prema-djelima-seksualnog-uznemiravanja-i-uznemiravanja-na-osnovu-spola-u-federalnim-organima-uprave-federalnim-upravnim-organizacijama-sluzbama-i-dr (accessed on 24.12.2023.)

order to ensure the right to a work environment free of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, an effective response to occurrences of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, including the initiation of effective protection mechanisms, an environment in which every person has the opportunity to report these acts and protection mechanisms against retaliation or victimization of persons who in good faith have reported or intend to report, testify, or in any other way participate, in the protection procedure, as well as the right to confidentiality of disciplinary procedure data.

5.2 Collection of data on gender-based violence against women and girls

Official statistics and research data on gender-based violence

State Level of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina **does not have an established common database on all forms of violence against women and domestic violence at the state level.** The lack of a clear methodology, as well as legal, administrative, and political obstacles to the establishment of a unified system for data collection and analysis, was registered. The collection and analysis of data on various forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, as well as the collection of data according to the parameters recommended by the Committee for Monitoring the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) is incomplete and inconsistent. Current criminal laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not harmonized in the direction of recognition of criminal acts of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention. As a result, system data is not collected for crimes of violence against women that are not yet recognized by law.

The available official data for domestic violence in Brčko District of BiH indicate a small number of cases of domestic violence that are recognized as criminal acts, which may indicate that most reports are processed as offences, which implies a lighter punishment for perpetrators of violence[13].

Data on the judicial processing of criminal offenses in this area, which are collected within the Automatic Data Management System (CMS) managed by the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, are not publicly available. The Council maintains and annually publishes **data on the structure of crime in**

[13] Data on the structure of crime for 2022, in the data base of BiH High Judicial and Prosecution Council show that in Brčko District 16 reports of the criminal offence of Domestic Violence was received.

Bosnia and Herzegovina[14], from which it is possible to monitor the state of individual criminal offenses from the reporting of the offense to the imposition of the sanction or ending the proceedings, including those crimes in which women are the predominant victims.

> The data do not provide insight into the structure of perpetrators and victims of violence, their gender, age, mutual relationship, and other parameters that are important for monitoring the situation in the field of violence against women and domestic violence.

By analyzing the data from the annual review of the structure of crime in BiH for 2022, for the **criminal offence of Domestic Violence** in the context of the **movement of cases through the judicial system**, it was registered that in the Federation of BiH, in 2022, 1398 reports of this criminal offence were received, including unresolved cases from 2021. Of this number, in 623 cases (46%) an investigation was ordered, in 331 cases (24%) an order was made not to conduct an investigation, in 152 cases (11%) an order was made to suspend the investigation, and in 457 cases (33%) the indictment was confirmed. In the same period, 463 court decisions/sentences were passed for this criminal offence - 322 suspended sentences (70%), 96 prison sentences (21%), 24 fines (5%) and 21 acquittals were made. (5%). In the Republic of Srpska during 2022, including unresolved cases from 2021, the system received 1528 reports of the crime of domestic violence. Of this number, in 664 cases (43%) an investigation was ordered, in 212 cases (14%) an order was made not to conduct an investigation, in 325 cases (21%) an order was made to suspend the investigation, and in 338 cases (22%) it was confirmed is an indictment. In the same period, 245 court decisions/judgments were made for this criminal offense - 147 suspended sentences (60%), 51 convictions for fines (21%), 36 convictions for imprisonment (15%), and 11 acquittals (4%).

We have registered **the small number of confirmed indictments compared to the number of reported cases**, and the courts for the crime of domestic violence predominantly impose suspended sentences, which indicate that this crime is still viewed as less socially dangerous. In addition, according to the crime structure records maintained by the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, domestic violence is **the most reported criminal offense in Bosnia and Herzegovina**.

During 2022, **the Agency for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Human Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina** received **3 applications for investigation of violations of the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and**

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14 Annual overview of the crime structure in BiH. High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of BiH. Available at: https://vstv.pravosudje.ba/vstvfo/B/141/kategorije-vijesti/1198/1363/114475 (accessed on 25.06.2023.)

Herzegovina, **one of which refers to a case of gender-based violence**[15]. During 2022, the agency has not conducted research or population surveys on different forms of violence against women and girls.

Republic of Srpska

Data was collected for 2022, from the **Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Srpska** (MUP RS) on registered cases of gender-based violence based on criminal offences. [16]

> It is evident from the submitted data that the **data is only partially collected according to binding international recommendations,** and that it is only possible for the crime of Domestic Violence to monitor data on disability and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Data on the age of the victim and the perpetrator are collected for only some of the offences that are recognized as violence against women. Data on the ethnicity of the victim and the perpetrator are not recorded.

For the criminal offenses of **Murder** (Article 124 of the RS Criminal Code) and **Aggravated Murder** (Article 125 of the RS Criminal Code), 2 cases were recorded. Two victims are women over 60 years of age and one victim is a female newborn. The perpetrators are two men between the ages of 50 and 60 and one unknown person. The data are not classified by ethnicity, disability and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

For the criminal offence of **Stalking (**Article 144 of the RS Criminal Code), 34 cases were recorded. Twenty-seven (27) women and 8 men were registered as victims, while 28 men and 2 women were reported as perpetrators of this crime. The data are not classified by age, ethnicity, disability, or by the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

For the criminal offence of **Rape (**Article 165 of the RS Criminal Code), 6 cases were recorded, 5 victims were women, and 5 perpetrators were men, for one case the data is unknown. According to the age structure of the victims, 2 victims are between the ages of 16 and 18, one victim each between the ages of 18 and 21, 30 to 40 and 40 to 50 years old. According to the age structure of the perpetrators, two perpetrators are between the ages of 40 and 50, and one perpetrator is between the ages of 18 and 21, 21 to 30, and over 60. The data are not classified by ethnicity, disability and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

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15 Response of the Agency for Gender Equality of the BiH Ministry of human rights and refugees on the inquiry of the Foundation United Women, sent during 2023

16 Response of the Republic of Srpska Ministry of Interior, on the inquiry of the Foundation United Women during 2023

One case was registered for the criminal offence of **Sexual Blackmail** (Article 166 of the RS Criminal Code). The victim is a female between the ages of 16 and 18, and the perpetrator is a male between the ages of 18 and 21. The data were not recorded by ethnicity, disability and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

For the offence of **Sexual Harassment** (Article 170 of the RS Criminal Code), 15 cases were recorded, one of which was an attempt. Fifteen (15) victims are female, of which 6 victims are under the age of 14, 3 victims are 16 to 18 years old, 2 victims are 21 to 30 years old and 40 to 50 years old, and one victim is ages 18 to 21 and 40 to 50. 15 male perpetrators were registered, of which 6 perpetrators are over 60 years old, 3 perpetrators between 21 and 30 years old, 2 perpetrators each aged 30 to 40 years, 40 to 50 years old and 50 to 60 years old. The data are not classified by ethnicity, disability and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

1,034 cases were recorded for the criminal offence of **Domestic Violence** (Article 190 of the RS Criminal Code), including one offense with fatal consequences. The data is classified by sex, age, and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, as well as the victim's disability. The data are not classified by the perpetrator's disability and the ethnicity of the victim and the perpetrator. The data is publicly available in the framework of summary reports collected and published by the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Srpska on a semi-annual basis[17]. These records, among other things, contain information on the number and type of emergency protection measures and protective measures proposed by individual institutions that are recognized as subjects of protection imposed by the courts, as well as the gender and age structure of the persons to whom they were imposed.

Data on the number of violated measures and imposed sanctions due to the violation of measures, as well as the number of cases in which a woman was exposed to re-victimization or murder despite those measures, in accordance with the recommendation of GREVIO in the context of the application of the Istanbul Convention, are not available within these records.

Systemic data on various forms of violence against women and domestic violence to which multiple vulnerable groups of women are exposed, such as women with disabilities, women from villages, Roma women and other categories, are only partially collected and recorded.

Within the data that the **Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of Republic of Srpska** collects from centers for social work, there is a category in which data should be collected on **multiple marginalized victims of**

[17] Summary reports on domestic violence available on the web site of the RS Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports, at: https://vladars.rs/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mpos/oPorodica/Pages/Splash.aspx (accessed on 21.11.2023.)

violence[18], however this section remains without data. Data on cases of domestic violence against persons with disabilities are collected, but not for other forms of violence against women.

During 2022, the **Government of Republic of Srpska Gender Center** did not conduct research or population surveys regarding various forms of gender-based violence against women.

Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

For the purposes of monitoring the situation in the period of 2022, data was collected from nine (9) cantonal ministries of internal affairs in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina[19]. The data indicate the **absence of a unique and consistent methodology in the collection and recording of data in the context of compliance with the binding recommendations** of GREVIO and the CEDAW Committee, and therefore the data are not comparable, that is, it is not possible to present them in an aggregated manner. In response to the inquiry, the Gender Center of the Federation of BiH reported that they improved records keeping during 2022, through **the introduction of a column on the disability of the victim and the perpetrator of violence in the questionnaires submitted to the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of BiH**, however, until now they have not received this data.

The Gender Center of the Federation of BiH also states that data on the ethnicity of the victim and the perpetrator are still not collected, which is a recommendation of the CEDAW Committee addressed to BiH in the context of data collection on all forms of violence against women.

In the **Bosnian-Podrinje Canton**, 5 criminal offences of **Domestic Violence** (Article 222 of the FBiH Criminal Code) were recorded, the data on victims and perpetrators were not classified by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and relationship and 2 criminal offenses of **Fornication (**Article 208 of the FBiH Criminal Code) where 2 female victims and 2 male perpetrators were recorded - the data are not classified by age, disability, ethnicity and mutual relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

In the **Sarajevo Canton**, 7 criminal offences of **Murder** (Article 166 of the FBiH Criminal Code) were recorded, 3 victims were female, and 4 victims were male. For 2 cases, the relationship between the victim and the

[18] Section contains the following description "other important personal characteristics of the victim which are not stated, such as, national minorities, sexual orientation, pregnancy and other (number of victims in the situation of vulnerability due to some personal characteristics and potentially multiple discriminated).

[19] Data collected during 2023 via questionnaire delivered to ministries of interior of Bosnian - Podrinje canton, Goražde, Sarajevo canton, Central Bosnia canton, Una-Sana canton, Zenica-Doboj canton, Tuzla canton, West Herzegovina canton, Livno canton (Canton 10), and Posavina canton.

perpetrator is known - mother and daughter and grandmother and granddaughter, for other cases there is no information. Other parameters are unknown. For the criminal offense of **Rape** (Article 203 of the FBiH Criminal Code), 8 offences were recorded - in all cases the victims were women, the gender of the perpetrator is unknown. Data on the disability, age, ethnicity and mutual relationship between the victim and the perpetrator are not known. For the criminal offense of **Fornication** (Article 208 of the FBiH Criminal Code), 9 offenses were recorded - 7 victims were women, and 2 victims were men. In 3 cases, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is known - son - father, daughter - father and daughter-in-law - father-in-law. Five victims were minors, and four victims were adults. Four perpetrators are between the ages of 30 and 50, four perpetrators are over 60, and one perpetrator is unknown. Data on disability and ethnicity are not known. For the criminal offence of **Domestic Violence** (Article 222 of the FBiH Criminal Code), 239 criminal offenses were recorded - out of 239 victims, 188 were women and 72 were men, the perpetrators were men in 228 cases and women in 15 cases. Information on the age, disability, ethnicity and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is unknown.

In the **Central Bosnia Canton**, 1 criminal offence of **Rape** and 1 **Attempted Rape** were recorded (Article 203 of the FBiH Criminal Code), both victims are women of unknown age and other characteristics. Both perpetrators are men aged 63 and 54, other characteristics unknown. No information was recorded on the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. 8 cases were recorded for the criminal offense of **Fornication** (Article 208 of the FBiH Criminal Code) - 14 victims are females of unknown age, all perpetrators are males aged 27, 38, 46, 31, 24, 49, 68, 65 years. Ninety-five (95) cases were recorded for the criminal offence **of Domestic Violence** (Article 222 of FBiH the Criminal Code), where as data on the relationship between the perpetrator of violence and the victim in 66 cases were recorded as a married partner, 13 cases as an extramarital partner, 5 cases as a former partner, father-son relationship in 3 cases, father-daughter 8 cases, mother-son 1 case, mother-daughter 2 cases, son-father 6 cases, son-mother 5 cases, brother-brother 4 cases and son-in-law-mother-in-law 1 case. The age of victims and perpetrators is recorded, while the parameters of disability and ethnicity are not known.

In the **Una-Sana Canton**, 1 criminal offence of **Murder** (Article 166 of the FBiH Criminal Code) was recorded - the victim is a 33-year-old woman, while the perpetrator is a 40-year-old man. Data on disability, ethnicity and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator are not available. 2 criminal offenses of **Rape** (Article 203 of the FBiH Criminal Code), 2 criminal offenses of **Fornication** (Article 208 of the FBiH Criminal Code), and 157 criminal offenses of **Domestic Violence** (Article 222 of the FBiH Criminal Code) were recorded - data on gender, age, disability, ethnicity and relationship victim and perpetrator are not available.

In the **Zenica-Doboj canton**, 11 criminal offences of **Fornication** were recorded (Article 208 of the FBiH Criminal Code), 11 perpetrators were men - 1 perpetrator between the ages of 18 and 25, 2 perpetrators between the ages of 26 and 36, and 36 and older were 8 perpetrators, while other data are not available.

In **Tuzla Canton**, 4 criminal offences of **Murder** (Article 166 of the FBiH Criminal Code) were recorded - 2 victims were women, 2 victims were men, the perpetrators were men. The victims were 52, 64, 69 and 91 years old, and the perpetrators were 27, 34, 37 and 67 years old. The victims and perpetrators are of Bosniak nationality, two victims and the perpetrators are blood relatives, and in two cases the relationship between the victims and the perpetrator is unknown. Data on the disability of victims and perpetrators is not available. For the criminal offence of **Rape** (Article 203 of the FBiH Criminal Code), 2 cases were registered - the victims were 1 female and 1 male, the perpetrators were 3 males. The ages of the victims are 53 and 31 years old, and the ages of the perpetrators are 58, 26 and 37 years old, the victims and the perpetrators are of Bosniak nationality. One victim and the perpetrator are ex-spouses, while the other case has an undetermined relationship. Data on the disability of victims and perpetrators is not available. Nineteen (19) cases were recorded for the criminal offense of **Fornication** (Article 208 of the FBiH Criminal Code), data for all parameters are missing. Hundred and thirty two (132) cases were recorded for the criminal offence of **Domestic Violence** (Article 222 of the FBiH Criminal Code), data for all parameters are missing.

In the **West Herzegovina Canton**, 10 criminal offences of **Domestic Violence** (Article 222 of the FBiH Criminal Code) were recorded - 5 victims were men and 3 women. The relationships between the victim and the perpetrator are father - son, husband - wife, son-in-law - father-in-law, and mother - children. Data on other parameters are missing.

In **Livno Canton**, 2 criminal offences of **Fornication** were recorded (Article 208 of the FBiH Criminal Code), the data were not classified by gender, disability and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. The victims were 13 and 16 years old, and the perpetrators were 54 and 67 years old. One victim and perpetrator are of Croatian nationality, while the other victim and perpetrator are of Serbian nationality. Forty-two (42) criminal offences of **Domestic Violence** (Article 222 of the FBiH Criminal Code) were registered, and 24 reports on the committed crime were submitted to the responsible prosecutor's office. Thirty-six (36) female victims, 32 male perpetrators and 2 female perpetrators were registered. The data are classified by the age of the perpetrator, not the victim of violence. The data are classified according to the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator - 9 cases of wife-husband, 3 cases of unwed wife - unwed husband, 4 cases of mother - son, 4 cases of daughter - father, 4 cases of brother - brother, 6 cases of father - son, 1 case of son - father, 2 cases of daughter-in-law - father-in-law, 1 case of husband - wife. Data disaggregated by disability and ethnicity are not available.

In the **Posavina Canton**, 1 criminal offense of **Domestic Violence** was recorded (Article 222 of the FBiH Criminal Code). The victim is a 44-year-old female, and the perpetrator is a 52-year-old male. The relationship between victim and perpetrator is sister and brother. Data on disability and ethnicity is not available.

During 2022, the Institute for Social Research of the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Sarajevo and the Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina carried out research and prepared the study **"Violence in the family and gender-based violence in higher education: between theory and practice"**[20] within the framework of the Strategy for Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence. The research carried out an analysis of the curricula and programs of social science and humanities faculties at the University of Sarajevo, on the representation and scope of teaching contents that deal with the issue of gender-based violence and domestic violence, as well as the attitudes of students and teaching staff on these issues. The analysis of the situation represents the starting point for monitoring the impact of the implemented measures within the Strategy for the prevention and combating domestic violence of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Population surveys on different forms of violence against women have not been conducted.

Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina

For the purposes of monitoring the situation in the period of 2022, data was collected from the Police of the Brčko District of BiH (PBDBH) on registered cases of gender-based violence based on criminal offences[21]. 1 case was recorded for the criminal offense of **Murder** (Article 163 of BDBiH Criminal Code), the victim and the perpetrator are men aged 56 and 86, the perpetrator and the victim knew each other. The perpetrator is of Bosniak nationality, and no nationality records are kept for the victim. For the criminal offense **of Domestic violence** (Art. 218 CC BDBiH), 16 cases were recorded - 15 victims were female, 4 victims were male. The ages of the injured are 1, 2, 15, 24, 26, 26, 29, 29, 30, 30, 34, 39, 42, 44, 60, 60, 61, 64, 68 years old. The age of the perpetrators is 26, 30, 31, 31, 32, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 42, 43, 44, 45, 50, 65 years old. Data on the ethnicity of the victims are not kept, and the ethnicity of the perpetrators is 7 Bosniak, 6 Serbian, 2 Croatian and 1 Jewish perpetrator. In 14 cases, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is wife-husband, and in 2 cases, child-parent. Data classified by the disability of the victim and the perpetrator are not available.

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20 Amer Osmić et all. "Domestic Violence and Gender Based Violence in Higher Education – Between Theory and Practice" , Faculty of Political Science – University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, 2022, available at: https://fpn.unsa.ba/b/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/STUDIJA_FINAL_NuP-1.pdf (accessed on 14.09. 2023.)

21 Response of PBDBiH on the questionnaire sent by the Foundation United Women in 2023

Data from Civil Society Organizations Providing Specialized Support and Assistance Services to Women Survivors of Violence

Available data from civil society organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina that provide specialized support and assistance to women and children who have survived some form of gender-based violence indicate a continuous increase in SOS calls and requests for help. Incomplete data on the **number of SOS calls** to available help lines in BiH indicate that **only in 2022, 5243 calls were received**[22], which is 10% more than in 2020, **for which there are the latest official data**[23]. Data collected from seven (7) non-governmental organizations indicate that only during 2022, **provided 5,243 free legal aid services and 2,478 psychological aid and support services to women** who are exposed to various forms of violence in the family and outside it. According to media reports[24], from August 2023, when the murder of N.H. happened in Gradačac, calls to SOS phones for victims of violence have increased many times, as well as requests for legal and psychological support from women who are exposed to various forms of violence.

In contrast, available official data indicate that in the Republic of Srpska, **3,276 calls were received to the SOS helpline for victims of violence (1264) during 2022, which is a 25% decrease in the number of calls compared to the official data on the number of SOS calls in 2021, when 4342 calls were registered**[25]. Official data on the SOS number for victims of violence in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2022 are not available.

Data collected through monitoring media reporting in Bosnia and Herzegovina indicate **20 cases of murder of women (femicide) in the period 2022-2023 – 10 cases in 2022 and 10 cases in 2023**. Although the number of recorded cases in the past two years is the same, **during 2023, 7 attempts of femicide were also recorded**, which indicates an increase in severe forms of violence against women throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 60% of cases, the perpetrators of murder or attempted murder are current or former married or extramarital partners of the female victims. Over **75%** of murders or attempted murders were committed in the **home or apartment where the victim lived with her husband/partner or the apartment/house where she lived**

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22 Data collected from Association „Medica" from Zenica, Center of Women's Women Rights from Zenica, Foundation „Lara" from Bijeljina, Foundation of Local Democracy from Sarajevo, Association „Budućnost" from Modriča, Foundation „Women's Centre" from Trebinje and Foundation United Women from Banja Luka during 2023.

23 As in data from the statistical bulletin "Women and men in BiH", BiH Agency for statistics, Sarajevo, published in 2022, during 2020 SOS helplines for victims of violence received 5011 calls.

24 "Women victims of violence in BIH fear more than ever, SOS helpline is "burning", Fokus, 18.08.2023, direct link: https://www.fokus.ba/vijesti/bih/zene-zrtve-nasilja-u-bih-nikad-u-vecem-strahu-sos-linija-za-pomoc-je-uzarena/2699662/, (accessed on 20.08.2023.) "Increased number of call to SOS red line in BiH, citizens are reporting notion about violence, Klix, 16.08.2023., direct link: https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/povecan-broj-poziva-sos-crvenoj-liniji-u-bih-gradjani-prijavljuju-saznanja-o-nasilju/230815064 (accessed 20.08.2023.)

25 Statistical bulletin „Women and men in Republic of Srpska 2023", Institute for statistics of Republic of Srpska, Banja Luka, page 75

alone after leaving her husband/partner, indicating that the **home remains the most dangerous place for women who are exposed to violence.** In **48%** of cases, murders of women or attempted murders of women were carried out **using firearms that were in the illegal possession of the perpetrators.**

5.3 Prevention of Gender Based Violence Through Awareness Raising and Education of Professionals on all Forms of Gender Based Violence Against Women

No changes were observed in the approach and commitments of public institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of preventing all forms of gender-based violence against women. There is still a lack of **strategic determination and continuous implementation of measures, including campaigns that were created in such a way as to indicate a gender-based understanding of violence against women**, aimed at raising the awareness of the general population and professionals in the chain of protection against violence about the causes and consequences of various forms of violence against women. to women, overcoming patriarchal and stereotypical attitudes towards women and which pay particular attention to marginalized groups of women[26] and the intersectional discrimination they are exposed to in connection with the violence they have survived.

Campaigns are still primarily carried out by public institutions that are recognized as institutional mechanisms for gender equality, while other institutions and ministries are limitedly involved, most often through marking international dates in the field of gender-based violence and protection of women's human rights.

Civil society organizations in the field of protection of women's human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina are committed to responding to cases of violence against women and continuously act through public advocacy actions for an adequate systemic response in the direction of preventing and suppressing violence, which includes prevention of violence, protection of victims, consistent prosecution of perpetrators of violence and integrated policies as well as laws that are aligned with the binding international standards of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention.

[26] Such as Roma women, LGBITQ+ persons, older women, women with disabilities, women from rural areas, single mothers, migrant women etc.

Information about available general services and procedures related to support and protection measures is limited and, as a rule, without clearly presented steps that enable women exposed to violence to seek help and protection.

Bosnia and Herzegovina level

The Agency for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina has, at the beginning of 2023, published infographics[27] on its website promoting the **recommendations of the Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW). One of the infographics refers to gender-based violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which highlights the obligations in the context of a systemic response to violence against women through prevention, protection and access to adequate assistance that is available to all victims, regardless of where they live, and adequate punishment of perpetrators of violence, without returning to violent behavior. The infographic also presents key statistics on violence against women in BiH collected through an earlier population survey, SOS lines for victim support and key recommendations of the CEDAW Committee in this area. In accordance with its mandate, the Agency organizes activities related to the 16 Days of Activism campaign against gender-based violence in BiH every year.

Republic of Srpska

Every year, **the Government of the Republic of Srpska Gender Center** organizes activities on the occasion of the global campaign "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" (November 25th -December 10th) and, as a part of its contribution, realizes a public awareness campaign with the slogans **"Life without violence", "White ribbon - male NO to violence against women", Stop violence against women. No more victims! For the safe life of every woman".** The Gender Center joined the global campaign **"Generation for Equality"[28]**, which is coordinated by the UN Women office in BiH, and is carried out in cooperation with the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH, the Gender Center of the Republika Srpska, the Gender Center of the Federation of BiH, the United Nations in BiH, including the UN Population Agency the United Nations Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), with the support of the French and British embassies, support of Sweden, and with the participation of civil society organizations. In December 2021, in Banja Luka,

27 Infographics available at : https://arsbih.gov.ba/resursi/infografici (accessed on 23.08.2023.)

28 More about activities within the campaign „Generation for Equality" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, at: https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/BHS.pdf (accessed on 17.12.2023.)

the Action Coalition to end gender-based violence was formed, with focus on sexual violence and sexual harassment and to confirm commitment to the highest standards in the fight against violence against women.

Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Gender Center of the Federation of BiH continuously implements **the "Bolje'vako" campaign** with the aim of changing social awareness through changing individual patterns of behavior, strengthening partner relations and communication with children. Risk factors for violent patterns of behavior were discussed in the eight short videos[29] produced, and the segment of people with disabilities was also integrated in the promotional videos (sign language, people in wheelchairs, etc.). In response to the inquiry[30], the Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina states that over 7,500,000 impressions[31] were made during the three years of the campaign implementation through various social networks. The campaign was created with the funds of the FIGAP II Program 2018-2020, which is aimed at the implementation of the BiH Gender Action Plan. Every year, the Gender Center of FBiH celebrates the 16th Day of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, within which the two-day conference **"Multidisciplinary Approach to the Prevention and Combating Against Domestic Violence**" is organized.

Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina

In response to the inquiry[32], **the Brcko District Police** stated that it participated in public campaigns and activities to prevent gender-based violence during 2022. Most of the activities were aimed at participation in online workshops with non-governmental organizations. As a part of the 16 days of activism against violence against women, the Police of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in activities organized by the Women's Association "Gender" Brčko, and cooperated with the Lara Foundation from Bijeljina, the Association of Citizens of Viva Women from Tuzla, OSCE and UN Women in BiH. The Education Department of the Brčko District Government did not state in its response to the inquiry[33] that it participated in violence prevention activities. The institutions of the Brčko District, as part of monitoring activities for the implementation of the **Framework of Sustainable Development Goals in BiH[34],** reported that in the course of

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29 Videos available on Youtube channel Bolje Vako at: https://www.youtube.com/@boljevako5211 (accessed on 17.12.2023.)
30 Response from FBIH Gender Center on questionnaire sent by the Foundation United Women in 2023
31 Bolje Vako FB profile available at: https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066338746883 (accessed on 17.12.2023).
32 Response from BiH Brcko district on questionnaire sent by Foundation United Women in 2023
33 Response of the Brcko District Government Education Department on the questionnaire sent by Foundation United Women 2023
34 Framework of Sustainable Development Goals in BiH is a strategic document for implementation of Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals, serving as a wider framework for direction of current and future processes of strategic planning on levels of BiH, Republic of Srpska, Federation of BiH and Brcko District of BiH. Available at: https://zamisli2030.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Okvir-za-realizaciju-Ciljeva-odrzivog-razvoja-u-BiH-latinica.pdf (accessed on 24.12.2023)

2022, there were no activities aimed at developing and supporting the mixed system (projects owned by the Brčko District and the non-governmental sector) and housing services in social protection, within which the mentioned measures are aimed at preventing domestic violence, and opening and supporting the safe house program for victims of violence, abuse and neglect[35].

Activities of Women and Men Citizens and Activists from Civil Society Organizations in BiH

In the period 2022-2023, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, four protests were organized and supported by activists of women's non-governmental organizations and citizens throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, raising their voice in the public due to the absence of effective systemic protection of women from violence, lack of responsibility of institutions and the non-recognition of femicide (murder of women) in the laws of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first protest under the slogan **"Our Pain is Your Shame"** was organized on October 14, 2022, in 19 cities in BiH after the murder of E.O. in Bihać by her husband. The participants of the protest called for a stronger reaction from institutions in the direction of preventing and suppressing gender-based violence, including criminal legislation reforms through the recognition of femicide and the prosecution of criminal acts of violence against women. Although the protests received a lot of media attention, the institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not initiate activities and measures in this area.

During 2023, three more protests were organized in response to cases of violence and murder of women - on August 9th in Jablanica, as a reaction to the beating of E.K., a worker at the Hotel "Jablanica" in Jablanica by A.DŽ. the owner of the hotel, who was sentenced to 10 months in prison in the subsequent criminal proceedings before the Municipal Court in Sarajevo[36]. Protests were organized on August 21st and October 11th under the slogan **"Not Even One More",** throughout BiH, as a reaction to the murder of N.H. in Gradačac. Citizens and activists across BiH sent specific requests to the police, prosecutor's offices, courts, and legislative institutions in BiH.

Requests[37] sent to **the police, prosecutor's offices and courts** are directed at ensuring the protection of victims of violence and the urgency of action, initiating disciplinary proceedings

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35 Brcko District Development Report, 2022 Annual Report, Brčko District BiH, November 2023. Available at: http://vlada.bdcentral.net/content/DownloadAttachment/?id=ffd481fe-8889-49e9-9a56-26dc2b31b9cf&langTag=sr (accessed on 29.12.2023)

36 News: "Owner of the Hotel Sentenced to 10 months in Prison: Brutally Beat up the Employee Enisa Klepo and Gave Her Serious Injuries", portal Blic.rs, 28.12.2023, available at: https://www.blic.rs/vesti/republika-srpska/vlasnik-hotela-koji-je-pretukao-radnicu-enisu-klepo-osuden-je-na-10-meseci-zatvora/dx2h6ww (accessed on 29.12.2023.)

37 Detailed list of protest demands, from protest held on October 11th, 2023, available in BiH via web presentation of the BiH Women's Network: http://zenskamreza.ba/zahtjevi-protesta-protiv-femicida-i-nasilja-nad-zenama-i-djevojcicama/ (accessed on 2.11.2023.)

against responsible persons in case of failure to provide the necessary protection, enabling the necessary support for victims of violence in criminal proceedings against the perpetrator, access to support and protection services for victims of violence and stricter punishments for perpetrators of violence. The demands addressed to the **legislators in BiH** are directed at recognizing the gender-motivated murder of a woman - femicide - as a separate criminal offence, recognizing children as victims of domestic violence, monitoring cases through a single database, introducing sanctions for inaction for all officials of institutions who in their actions did not take measures to protect victims and prevent violence, tighten the control of issuing permits for the possession of weapons and regulate the obligation of regular training from the budget funds of all representatives of institutions responsible for preventing and suppressing violence.

Protests throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina have contributed to the **visibility of problems related to the prevention and combating violence against women, especially the non-compliance of laws with the Istanbul Convention, the failure to provide protection to victims and prevent the escalation of violence, the mild penalty policy, and the absence of responsibility of public institutions for the protection of women from gender-based violence.** The protests undoubtedly influenced the fact that the Republika Srpska, as part of the previously started process of drafting the new Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, included in the text of the draft law the definition of femicide, in the context of its prevention, defined violence against women, and changed the name of the law to the Law on Protection from domestic violence and violence against women, which was adopted in the first reading in October 2023. In December 2023, after the end of the investigation into the murder of N.H. in Gradačac, the Office of the Disciplinary Prosecutor of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated a disciplinary action against L.H. [38], a judge of the Municipal Court in Gradačac, for negligence or carelessness in the performance of official duties, after refusing the request of the police to impose a protective measure of prohibiting access to the victim of violence, for the perpetrator of violence who killed N.H. on August 11th , 2023, in Gradačac.

Education of Women and Men Professionals in the Area of Prevention and Suppression of Gender Based Violence

By analyzing the data received from the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Srpska, the Gender Center of the Government of the Republic of Srpska and the Ministry of Health of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2022-2023, continuity was registered in the

[38] News: "Disciplinary procedure against judge woman in Gradačac because of the case Sulejmanović", portal Mondo, 13.12.2023, available at: https://mondo.ba/Info/Drustvo/a1264918/Disciplinski-postupak-protiv-sutkinje-Lejle-Numanovic.html (accessed on 24.12.2023.)

implementation of institutionally integrated educations of professionals in the system of protection against violence. However, there is still a lack of a structured assessment of the impact of training professionals in public institutions that are recognized as subjects of protection against violence against women on their actions in providing support to victims of violence, with clear indicators of progress. The existing evaluation is focused on identification of obstacles in the actions of institutions and recommendations for further action, rather than collecting and analyzing feedback on how the training contributed to providing protection and support to victims of violence and responding to cases of violence in practice. The plans of the RS Ministry of Interior to collect information and monitor the behavior of police officers towards victims and perpetrators of violence through the creation of anonymous questionnaires, and their availability in police stations, as well as the intention to monitor specialist training for police officers certified to work on cases of domestic violence, through anonymous questionnaires.

In response to the inquiry[39], the **Republic of Srpska Ministry of Education and Culture** states that it is implementing the program **"Caring for children - joint responsibility and obligation**", in connection with which there is also the program **"Referral mechanism for supporting children in the schools of the Republic of Srpska".** These programs include the formation of multisector teams in schools made up of representatives of schools, centers for social work, health institutions and the police, as well as the local community, with the coordination of the Republic Pedagogical Institute, with the aim of protecting children. The program supports the implementation of the **Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Violence, Abuse and Neglect of Children**, including domestic violence. Lists for identifying indicators of problems and disorders in children have been introduced in schools. Through this program, professional associates and teachers employed in schools received professional training and learn new methods and techniques for identifying and working with at-risk groups of children, along with prepared instruments for identifying and further treating children and families. The activities of the program are carried out in cooperation with the Association of Psychologists of the RS, with the financial support of UNICEF in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are no available data on the number of trained staff in schools, as well as whether an analysis of the impact assessment of professional training of professionals in education has been carried out.

[39] Response on the questionnaire sent by Foundation United Women to the Republic of Srpska Ministry of Education and Culture during 2023

Overview of Educations Implemented by Public Institutions in BiH for the Period 2022-2023[40]

Institution	Period	No. Of educated professionals	Sectors	Education themes	Education Impact assessment
BiH Agency for Gender Equality	**2022-2023**	**15**[41]	Institutions at the BiH level from various sectors, including health sector	_ Training for newly appointed counselors for the prevention of sexual harassment in BiH Institutions _ Training for staff in Crisis Centers for victims of rape and sexual violence _ Training for civil servants of BiH institutions organized by the BiH Civil Service Agency, on the topic "Recognition of violence against women and domestic violence and the obligation to report violence" (an employee of the BiH Agency for Gender Equality was the lecturer)	The assessment of the impact of the trainings is included in the annual reports submitted to the Council of Ministers of BiH
Government of Republic of Srpska Gender Center	**2022**	**325**	Justice system, centers for social work, police, health institutions, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, relevant ministries, representatives of local authorities	_ Implementation of the Istanbul Convention _ Challenges in the application of domestic legislation in cases of domestic violence and violence against women _ Sexual harassment, criminal offences in the field of sexual offenses _ Implementation of local protocols on procedures and cooperation	There is no impact assessment for the trainings in the context of the participants' work with victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence, including domestic violence. The assessment was carried out on the basis of monitoring the situation on the territory of Herzegovina, where trainings were conducted and where mentoring visits were organized, which identified recommendations directed at improving multisectoral cooperation: _ In the region of Herzegovina, open a Resource Center for issues of domestic violence and violence against women, which would provide educational, legal-advisory, and alternative accommodation support for victims of violence; _ Within the Resource Center, develop and support locally specific projects with the aim of combating violence; _ Include a greater number of professionals from institutions and services in the trainings; _ Involve religious officials in the process of education and cooperation; _ Organize permanent mentoring support and training for coordination teams in local communities; _ Work on programs to improve preventive action through program planning; _ Subjects of protection/institutions to appoint

40 Data presented in the table are delivered upon queries of the Foundation United Women in 2023

41 The number relates to trained women and men professionals in 2023, while there is no data for training participants numbers in 2022.

					persons who work on cases of violence against women and domestic violence, in order to ensure continuity in the work of multisectoral teams; _ Continue to appeal to local communities to engage more actively and to form coordination bodies, in order to fulfill obligations and make local protocols available as soon as possible, so that obligations are fulfilled and the protocol serves the purpose for which it is adopted; _ Continue to appeal for the need for judicial authorities to cooperate with other subjects of protection in all local communities; _ In the municipalities where the protocols were adopted, make changes in the protocols, and harmonize them with the current legal regulations; _ In cooperation with the courts, ensure the possibility of delivering the judgments made against the perpetrators of violence to all relevant subjects of protection.
Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Gender Center	**2022**	**195**	Justice, social protection, police, health, education, non-governmental organizations, and media.	_ Application of regulations in the field of domestic violence. _ Multisectoral education for the prevention and handling of cases of domestic violence. _ Proceedings in cases of violence and the role of the municipal multisectoral team	Impact assessment was not realized
Republic of Srpska Ministry of Interior	**2022-2023**	**482**[42]	Police officers, police academy cadets The trainings were conducted in cooperation with the OSCE, the Center for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors of the RS, the Atlas Initiative, the Foundation United Women	_ Domestic violence, violence against women _ Protection of victims of sexual violence with a focus on the criminal offence of rape _ Gender equality, women's human rights and women's security needs _ Gender-sensitive police work in cases of violence against women and girls	There is no impact assessment of the trainings in the context of the work of police officers with victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence, including domestic violence. An activity with certified police officers (through an anonymous survey) by lecturers for specialist training is planned. It is planned to create a questionnaire for victims, as well as perpetrators, of criminal offences of domestic violence and violence against women, which should be offered to them in police stations to fill out after taking statements and other forms of action by police officers. Surveys should be anonymous, in order to adequately monitor the work of acting police officers, as well as the actual impact of organized trainings and seminars.
BiH Brcko District Police	**2022**	**-**	Training of police officers on topics related to gender-based violence,	_ The trainings are conducted in cooperation with the Police Academies in BiH, the Centers for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors of the Republic of	There is no impact assessment of the training in the context of the work of police officers with victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence, including domestic violence.

[42] Additionally, during 2023, the Republic of Srpska Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with Foundation United Women, organized an education about domestic violence and violence against women for cadets of 24th class of Police Academy, in total 6 platoons.

			human trafficking.	Srpska and the Federation of BiH, and international organizations ICITAP, UNDP, OSCE, and IOM. _ Training of police officers in Brčko District is also conducted by non-governmental organizations, within their activities. _ Brčko District Police actively participated in meetings, round tables and the like, or online workshops organized in the area of Brčko District BiH and wider area, as well as public awareness campaigns on the importance of protecting women and girls from domestic violence.	
Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Health	**2022**	**287**[43]	Health workers and associates, employees of health centers	Development of an internal protocol and standard operating procedures in the area of recognition and work with victims of gender-based violence for health centers	By filling out the evaluation questionnaire on trainings, within the Conference "Development of internal protocol and standard operating procedures in the area of recognition and work with victims of gender-based violence for health centers", an assessment of the impact of training on the knowledge and skills of team members in individual services was made, as well as an assessment of the need for continuing training. The key results show that the participants of the training are extremely satisfied with the structure of the education and the way of working (through exercises and practical examples). They especially emphasize that separate workshops with individual health centers, when working in their home environment, have an impact on non-medical staff as well as on management. The need for continuous training was highlighted, especially due to the pronounced migration of the workforce in health care, changes in the workplace and the environment. Health centers, where training has not yet been implemented, emphasize the need to organize training for their employees as well. Many directors of health centers, who were present at the Conference, expressed their support for the introduced work approach, because Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are formalized within health centers, and are subject to regular updating and introduce a uniform standardized work approach. A small number of health centers pointed out that although they have SOPs, a certain number of employees do not comply with them, or are not aware

[43] In response to the inquiry from the Foundation United Women sent during 2023, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Health states that during 2022, 87 health workers from 5 health centers in FBiH, were trained, and the conference was organized on the subject of conduct with victims of gender based violence with over 200 representatives of health centers from FBiH, with the support of UNFPA.

					that they have been adopted at the level of the institution. It is evident that certain institutions in these topics rely on the knowledge and enthusiasm of individuals, and not on the systemic support of management and heads of departments. They proposed several thematic conferences, round tables, narrowly focused on certain problems, with the mandatory presence of the management of health institutions, in order to exchange experiences and improve models of internal controls over the application of adopted protocols and procedures.
Total:		**1304**			

Overview of Implemented Educations of Women and Men Professionals by Civil Society Organizations in BiH During 2022

Available data about the trainings of professionals from public institutions in the field of prevention and suppression of gender-based violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, conducted during 2022, indicate that **there is continuity** in the direction of contributing to raising the capacity of protection entities to apply new legal solutions, but also to the improvement of actions in providing support and assistance to victims of violence.

An important segment in the training of professionals is work on **changing attitudes by overcoming gender prejudices and stereotypes,** along with passing on experiences in direct work with survivors, which contributes to a sensitized approach in working with women and children who are recognized as the most frequent victims of violence.

Continuity of trainings conducted by civil society organizations depends on project planning, available financial resources through the support of international donors, and cooperation with public institutions.

Non-governmental organization	No. of women and men professionals in trainings	Sectors	Themes
Lara Foundation (Bijeljina)	**115**	Police, judiciary (judges and prosecutors), social work, health institutions	Implementation of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence; Challenges of criminal investigations for criminal offences of domestic violence; A new concept of the criminal offence of rape - a module for the training of professionals in the judiciary has also been developed[44]
Women's Rights Center (Zenica)	**375**	Judges, prosecutors, other staff of courts and prosecutor's offices, social workers, lawyers, and other professionals in the field of social protection, police, health workers, educators, representatives of municipal administrations, representatives of local communities.	Gender (in)equality - prejudices and stereotypes; Familiarizing with the influence of the social framework that affects the creation of gender standards and roles, gender stereotypes, gender inequality; Abuse of power in the private and public sphere and the impact on the position of women in society.
Women's Centre (Trebinje)	**100**	Police, centers for social work, judiciary, health centers, educational institutions	Documenting domestic violence and risk assessment
Foundation United Women (Banja Luka)	**175**	udges and prosecutors, social workers, representatives of domestic violence protection entities, from Prijedor, Prnjavor, Banja Luka and Gradiška.	Prosecution of criminal offenses in the field of gender-based violence; Basic elements for establishing a consulting relationship with a victim of violence and the techniques of conducting interviews and active listening, familiarizing victims of violence with their rights and familiarizing them with the competences in the actions of relevant services, individual support plan for victims of domestic violence, integration of extended rehabilitation and integration services into an individual support plan , children as victims of domestic violence, basic information that children should have, methods and techniques, prolonged forms and manifestations of violence after leaving a violent community - coercive control, blackmail, manipulation, teamwork in cases of violence, the importance of consulting several experts and services, supervision, difficult professional decisions.
Total:	**765**		

[44] Prof.dr. Ivanka Marković "New Concept of the Criminal Offence of Rape, Module for Education of Women and Men Professionals in Community", Lara Foundation and Foundation of Local Democracy, Bijeljina, Sarajevo, 2023, available at: https://www.fondacijalara.com/images/docs/Novi%20koncept%20krivicnog%20djela%20silovanja_web_fin.pdf (accessed on 24.12.2023.)

5.4 Access to General and Specialized Support and Assistance Services for Women Survivors of Gender Based Violence

During the period 2022-2023, no changes have been observed in the direction of the introduction of the legal obligation for all law enforcement officers and professionals who provide general support services to inform women who have survived various forms of gender-based violence about the rights and services available within the protection entities in a way that is understandable to them.

In the currently operational **Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Republic of Srpska**[45], this obligation is prescribed for all institutions that are the subjects of protection to inform the victims of domestic violence at the first contact, in a manner understandable to them, about all the rights they have in accordance with this and other regulations, institutions, bodies, legal entities and organizations providing assistance, support and protection, including the right to free legal aid. Other regulations in BiH do not contain similar provisions, nor are victims of other forms of gender-based violence covered by the obligation to be informed.

In the report on the results of activities for 2022, the **Institution of the Ombudsman for Human Rights of BiH** emphasizes the **need to achieve protection from sexual and gender-based violence for persons with disabilities, as well as adequate procedures for reporting violence**. The report states that most of the institutions where people with disabilities are accommodated, in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska, have adopted written procedures for the prevention, reporting and provision of protection in cases of reports of sexual and gender-based violence against people with disabilities. [46]

Civil society organizations that provide specialized services of support and assistance to victims of violence, point to challenges in the actions of public institutions in BiH in ensuring protection and support for victims of violence.

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[45] Article. 10, pg. 2 and 3, Republic of Srpska Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska no. 102/2012, 108/2013, 82/2015 i 84/2019

[46] 2022 Annual Report on Results of Activities of the Institution of BIH Ombudsman for Human Rights, page 132. Available at : https://www.ombudsmen.gov.ba/Download.aspx?id=339&lang=BS (accessed on 24.12.2023.)

In response to the inquiry, the **Lara Foundation from Bijeljina** indicates that at least half of the women who applied for counseling services came after encountering misunderstanding or wrongdoing by the institutions, which required sending questions or complaints to the institutions. In most cases, these objections were accepted and shortcomings in the institutions' actions were eliminated. The biggest challenge was the initiation of **emergency protection measures**, which used to be a key point of encouragement for the victims that they would be protected. On several occasions, the Lara Foundation wrote requests for the imposition of emergency protection measures on behalf of women exposed to violence. **At the end of 2022, the number of requests from the police to impose emergency protection measures increased, which is an encouraging indicator**.

Financing of the Specialized Support Services and Assistance to Victims of Gender Based Violence

The recommendation of the Committee of Members of the Istanbul Convention *calls on Bosnia and Herzegovina to "ensure sustainable and sufficient funding for the work of women's organizations that run specialized services for victims of violence against women, in all parts of the country, through transparent and responsible public procedures, as well as the establishment of a consultative dialogue at all levels of government with these organizations, so that their opinions and experiences could be integrated into policies aimed at combating violence against women"* ***(paragraphs 43 and 47****). In addition,* ***GREVIO encourages the authorities*** *to remove the system of mandatory referrals by centers for social work to safe houses, for victims of domestic violence, including the possibility for women victims of domestic violence to request support themselves* ***(paragraph 137****).*

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

Sustainable exit strategies and support for women survivors of violence through economic empowerment, financial support, employment support and social housing almost entirely depend on programs implemented by civil society organizations, with very limited support from government institutions/public budget funds.

The Agency for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina annually allocates 100,000 KM for the operation of eight safe houses for women and children victims of domestic violence in BiH (12,500 KM each). In 2023, through the budget rebalancing, the City of

Sarajevo allocated funds for support of safe houses providing support to victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the amount of 240,000 KM (30,000 KM each). [47]

In the Republic of Srpska, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports allocates 300,000 KM 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 fulfill this obligation. The experiences of organizations that run safe houses for women and children who are victims of violence in the Republic of Srpska indicate that access to safe houses is difficult for women and children who are exposed to violence due to different practices in the work of local centers for social work, when issuing decisions on accommodation in a safe house, refunding funds for accommodation, and supporting victims of domestic violence through the operation of safe houses. In the period of the last three years, the Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Banja Luka, run by the Foundation United Women, accommodated a total of 36% of women and children victims of violence from Srbac, Kotor Varoš, Doboj, Prijedor, Ribnik. Kneževo, Brod, Novi Grad, Kozarska Dubica and Šipovo, for which funds from the budget of local communities were not refunded. The Safe House in Bijeljina, run by the Lara Foundation, housed a total of 41% of women and children who were victims of violence from Lopare, Ugljevik, Bratunac and Zvornik, for which funds were not reimbursed from the local community's budgets.

The Safe House in Modriča, operated by the Association of Citizens "Budućnost", accommodated 42% of women and children who were victims of violence from the local communities of Doboj, Modriča, Šamac, Vukosavlje, Petrovo, Derventa, Pelagićevo, Donji Žabar and Brod, for whom no accommodation decisions were issued, nor have funds been reimbursed from the budgets of local communities. [48]

In 2022, the Government of the Republic of Srpska Gender Center, through projects and donations financed from international funding sources, allocated funds in the amount of 27,400 KM for campaigns to raise public awareness of various forms of gender-based violence, providing free legal and psychosocial support to victims of violence and economic empowerment of victims of violence through support for employment and self-employment. [49].

In the Federation of B&H, in 2023, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy of the Federation of BiH allocated 500,000 KM for co-financing of victims of violence in safe houses, which is an increase of 100%

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47 News: „Contracts Signed": Sarajevo City Allocated 240.000,00 KM for the Safe Houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina", Sarajevo City Council, direct link : https://gradskovijece.sarajevo.ba/potpisani-ugovori-grad-sarajevo-za-sigurne-kuce-u-bosni-i-hercegovini-izdvojio-240-00000-km/ (accessed on 24.12.2023.)

48 Data collected from organizations operating safe houses for women and children victims of domestic violence during 2023.

49 Response on the inquiry from the Foundation United Women to Republic of Srpska Gender Centre during 2023.

compared to the funds allocated by the Ministry on an annual basis in previous years. The funds were distributed as grant funds through a public call, and the Ministry announced that the adoption of the Law on Social Services of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is currently in draft form, will systematically solve the issue of financing safe houses for victims of domestic violence in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina[50]. In November 2023, the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, together with representatives of five organizations operating safe houses for victims of violence in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed the **General Declaration on Cooperation Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina**[51], which obliges the signatories to provide safe shelters for women who are victims of violence, compliance with the law on protection against domestic violence, and education of the public about the seriousness of the problem of violence against women and domestic violence, in order to reduce the stigmatization of victims and encourage the community to actively participate in preventing violence, strengthening legal measures and the institutional framework, continuous cooperation with civil society organizations operating safe houses and ministries, the cooperation of organizations with judicial institutions and the implementation of other activities aimed at the prevention and eradication of violence against women and domestic violence.

According to the Agreement on the Operation of the SOS helpline number 1265, the Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has, within its budget, an integrated budget line with 1,500 KM for the payment of the short code 1265, to the Regulatory Agency for Communications [52].

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

Non-governmental organizations continue to develop specialized support and assistance services, including addressing access to these services by women belonging to marginalized groups. Available services include support in care and recovery from violence through safe houses, free legal aid and counseling, psychosocial support, escort and support from a trusted person, economic empowerment activities and support in exit strategies from violence. Most

50 News: „Minister Delić and women directors of five safe houses in FBiH signed the General declaration on cooperation against violence against women and domestic violence in FBiH“, Government of FBiH , 27.11.2023, direct link: https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bs/ministar-delic-i-direktorice-pet-sigurnih-kuca-u-fbih-potpisali-opcu-deklaraciju-o-saradnji-protiv-nasilja-nad-zenama-i-nasilja-u-porodici-u-fbih (accessed on 24.12.2023.)

51 News: „Delić announced the prevention approach in combating violence, promised sustainable financing of safe houses“, 15.08.2023, Klix, direct link: https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/delic-najavio-preventivni-pristup-u-borbi-protiv-nasilja-obecao-stalno-finansiranje-sigurnih-kuca/230815138 (accessed on 24.12.2023.)

52 Response on the inquiry from Foundation United Women to the FBIH Gender Centre during 2023

organizations do not have the possibility of free representation in court and only one organization implements continuous work programs with perpetrators of gender-based violence.

The improvement of services is visible through the **establishment and development of new models of support** - the support of a trusted person, self-help groups, the establishment of a network of female helpers - 4P, the establishment of an SOS application and the provision of free online legal support for victims of violence, as well as the continuity in the development of information tools and resources for victims of violence about their rights and available support.

Access to safe houses and counseling centers of organizations for women with disabilities remains limited due to lack of technical equipment, architectural barriers, and limited training of staff to support people with hearing or speech impairments because of the lack of knowledge of sign language. Organizations are making efforts to make access to specialized services available for Roma and women from rural areas through the engagement of support persons and field visits.

The **development of specialized services for victims of sexual violence** includes the cooperation of organizations through the preparation of resource materials and staff training for working with women and children who have survived violence.

The Foundation of Local Democracy from Sarajevo provided **specialized support and assistance services** for 716 beneficiaries in 2022 - **safe shelter and support in recovery from violence** for 81 beneficiaries, **free legal support** for 449 beneficiaries, **free psychological assistance** for 120 beneficiaries and **socioeconomic support** for 66 beneficiaries. In the same period, the foundation received 1,351 calls to the **SOS helpline for victims of violence**. The Foundation of Local Democracy implements specific support programs that are adapted to the needs and challenges of women from various marginalized groups, such as women belonging to minority groups, women from rural areas, elderly women, women with disabilities, single mothers, and others. In addition to the services provided within **the Safe House and the Women's Center**, support services are also provided through **field visits in rural and remote areas.** On this way, women living in these regions are given access to specialized services and support, regardless of their geographic location. The Foundation develops and implements special empowerment programs with the focus on the needs and challenges of marginalized groups of women. These programs include **training, mentoring, counseling, and support directed at strengthening of their capacities and facilitating access to resources**. In order to ensure that services are available, the Foundation of Local Democracy actively cooperates with local organizations and the non-governmental sector operating in these communities. Data on specialized services provided to victims of violence are available to the public via the Foundation's website.

During 2022, the Foundation of Local Democracy developed new information tools and other methods to ensure that users and potential users are informed about their rights and available support. Flyers and leaflets were developed with basic information about available support services, and how and where users can get help. In addition to informative materials, leaflets were prepared that encourage victims to seek help, information about rights and resources, and to encourage them to recognize and report violence. Informational materials were distributed physically through the Women's Center, during field visits, workshops, and other events. The Foundation of Local Democracy does not implement work programs with perpetrators of violence.

The Foundation Lara from Bijeljina, in 2022, provided **safe shelter and support in recovery** from violence for 21 women and children who stayed in the Safe House for a total of 3302 days. There were 7 women, 5 girls of age between 14 and 18 years, and 9 children under the age of 14 - 5 girls and 3 boys - accommodated in the safe house. 477 users turned to the **free legal counseling center** and 11 users were provided with the **support services of a trusted person**. Through the **free psychological counseling center,** 558 treatments were provided through individual and group work and psychotherapy services, and 24 **self-help group** sessions were organized for 25 women (the group consists of up to 10 people who are continuously involved in a minimum of 10 sessions/meetings). In the same period, the foundation received 678 calls to the SOS helpline for victims of violence.

Data on the provided specialized services of support and assistance to victims of violence are available in the annual report on the work of the Foundation, which is published on the official website, as well as in the reports of the state bodies to which the Foundation Lara provides information on the services provided (Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports, City Administration Bijeljina for the annual report to the City Assembly of Bijeljina on the situation in the area of suppression of domestic violence and others).

In 2022, the Foundation Lara developed **Guidelines and recommendations for working with victims of sexual violence**[53], intended for activists who provide specialized help and support to victims of sexual violence, as well as other professionals who work with victims of sexual violence, including rape. They also prepared several promo videos with content intended to inform victims of gender-based violence about their rights, how to access rights and the help they can get from the Foundation Lara and other organizations that provide specialized help and support to victims of violence.

In providing specialized support services and assistance to victims of violence, the Foundation Lara from Bijeljina respects the **specific needs of marginalized groups of women**. For Roma women, they occasionally

[53]" Guidelines and Recommendations for Working with Victims of Sexual Violence", Foundation Lara, Bijeljina, 2022, Available at: https://www.fondacijalara.com/images/docs/Smjernice_i_preporuke_logo_neg.pdf (accessed on 02.11.2023.)

use the services of cultural advisors, usually activists from women's Roma organizations, who help build trust and remove possible language barriers. A similar approach has been developed for women with disabilities, persons with hearing and speaking difficulties or visually impaired persons, people with mobility problems and others. In these situations, the Foundation Lara works to remove physical barriers and provide assistance in communication (eg. sign language). Part of the staff of the Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Bijeljina has undergone training and learned to use sign language. However, the Foundation Lara does not have all the tools and knowledge that would enable the fully appropriate accommodation of all members of marginalized groups in the safe house, as well as the provision of quality services in accordance with their needs. There is a need for adaptation of the space (bathroom and technical aids) and training of staff to work with marginalized groups of women, in order to provide smooth access to the services of the safe house for women with disabilities. The Foundation Lara is currently overcoming the problem through the use of external counseling services of a psychologist who is also a person with disabilities.

Association Medica from Zenica provided in 2022 the support for 49 people (15 women, 34 children - 16 girls and 18 boys) in the **safe house**, with a total of 446 **individual counseling/therapy sessions were conducted as part of psychosocial support,** 29 **joint meetings with all users**, 1 **group educational -support session with women**, 16 **legal advices** provided, 1122 **medical interventions**. A total of 49 persons (33 women, 7 girls, 6 boys and 3 men) referred to the psychological counseling center. The total number of therapeutic treatments/sessions (first and other visits) at the Psychological Counseling Center "Medica" Zenica amounted to 133 sessions (65 with women, 14 with girls, 30 with boys and 24 with men). A total of 32 persons (28 women and 4 men) used the legal counseling center for the first time, and the total number of counseling sessions was 46 sessions (40 with women and 6 with men). A total of 75 calls were received to Medica Zenica active helplines and official email and Facebook addresses (67 calls to active helplines and 8 written addresses via email address), in which 75 interventions were provided (psychological support, information, legal assistance, reporting violence to the authorities institutions), and a total of 15 letters were sent to police administrations and centers for social work (5 to centers for social work and 10 to police administrations/stations).

As a part of the **economic and psychosocial empowerment,** in the educational center "Medica" Zenica and rural areas, a total of 39 women were included in the trainings (17 beneficiaries from the safe house as part of occupational therapy, 5 participants in the hairdressing course, 3 participants of the tailoring/sewing/upholstering course and 14 women from the village of Željezno polje - Municipality of Žepče, were attending the entire program of economic and psychosocial empowerment in rural areas). At the end of the training, a total of 19 certificates were distributed (6 for graduates from the educational center and 13 for graduates from rural areas). A total of 24 workshops for education and support, and 19 individual interviews

were conducted with participants of the economic and psychosocial empowerment program in the educational center and rural areas.

As a part **of work with survivors of war rape and sexual violence**, a total of 119 services were provided to a total of 33 women. The support was implemented through emotional support for clients, individual counseling therapy to treat exposure to various stressful situations, material support, mediation with institutions during the realization of rights in the field of social protection, logistical support (transportation, food), legal support in the process of achieving the status of a civilian war victim, writing complaints, supportive interventions according to the problems of the beneficiaries, psychological support during giving statements to the media and participation of survivors in public events. Medica Zenica awarded 38 **individual and group subsidies for self-employment in 2022, as a part of economic empowerment of women, and donations of packages of food and hygiene items,** in total value of 19,602 KM (17 individual and group subsidies as a part of economic empowerment and 21 donations of food and hygiene parcels for women clients upon leaving the safe house or after recognition of their needs through use of other services - survivors of war trauma, clients of the Psychological and Legal Counseling Center).

In 2022, Medica developed the online module **"Women's Rights and Prevention of Violence Against Women",** which includes 15 sessions discussing women's rights, stereotypes and prejudices about women and domestic violence, human trafficking, violence against children and the legal framework for protection against domestic violence. The participants of the course receive information on who to contact in cases of experienced violence, what kind of support they can get and what are the rights of victims of violence. The module was presented in 8 local communities from 8 cantons in the Federation of B&H, with the participation of 113 women.

Association of Citizens Budućnost, from Modriča, provided **support through the safe house** for 25 people in 2022 - 4 women and 21 children, and in the total number of children 16 were unaccompanied by their parents. The staff of the Association provided 39 **free legal advices** related to various legal procedures, organized 49 **individual sessions of psychological** help and support with children, 26 **sessions with women**, 25 **group sessions with children** and 6 **group sessions with women**. 75 **consultations and information sessions were held by the social worker to identify problems and find solutions**, 63 **pedagogical sessions**, 25 **field visits** were organized by the team of the safe house and the Men's Center in cooperation with representatives of centers for social work. The **SOS helpline for victims of violence** received 1,884 calls, of which 96.8% were made by women. Continuous occupational activities were carried out for women victims of violence, and permanent health care and company during visits to health institutions were provided as well. Data on specialized assistance and support services for survivors of gender-based violence, including domestic

violence and sexual violence, are submitted to the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Srpska, as well as to local communities.

Association of Citizens Budućnost, from Modriča conducts **work with perpetrators of gender-based violence through the activities of the Men's Center.** The program aims to improve the safety and well-being of women and children at risk of gender-based violence, by providing treatment to perpetrators of violence against women and girls through a structured psychosocial treatment and group program, to support their self-control and to stop using any form of violence, especially violence against women and girls. The association cooperates with the European Network for Work with Perpetrators of Violence, through participation in certified educations that contribute to improving their Men's Center staffs capacities for work with perpetrators of violence. The success of the Men's Center program is measured by a revised scale, through a questionnaire filled out by both partners. The results of the impact evaluation of the program for the perpetrators of violence who completed the program indicate that 88.88% of men became aware of their violent behavior, that they established self-control over their emotions and behavior, that they accepted responsibility for the violence that occurred, and that by learning social skills they can replace violent behavior with non-violent behavior.

The Center for Women's Rights from Zenica provides specialized services of free legal advice and assistance, free representation in court, psychosocial counseling, support from a trusted person in procedures related to violence and economic empowerment of women who have survived violence. During 2022, the center provided specialized services to 978 beneficiaries - 3463 **free legal aid** services, 803 sessions of **psychological support** for 81 women.

During 2021, the Center for Women's Rights established the **program of the network of assistants to support women in accessing social services and justice - 4P**[54], and in 2022 continued work on strengthening the capacity and overall work of the 4P Network. Specialized help and support services are available to marginalized groups of women through brochures, flyers, informational posters, posts on social networks, online counseling, and through the mobile number of the legal service, which is also available on the Viber application. The services of free legal aid and psychological support, as well as the overall programs of the Center for Women's Rights, like in the case of other women's organizations with specialized services, needs continuous, multi-year, institutional support.

During 2022, the Foundation United Women provided support and assistance in the **Safe house for women and children victims of violence** to 45 persons - 22 women and 23 children, who stayed in the safe house for

[54] More information on the program of the Network of Helpers for Support to Women in Accessing Social Services and Justice - 4P, available on the web page: https://mreza4p.com/ (accessed on 18.09.2023)

3449 days. In the same period, the Foundation submitted 21 **reports of domestic violence** and 1 **report of sexual violence** to the relevant police stations. 1259 **calls to the SOS helpline** were received and conducted the same number of confidential and advisory conversations about violence. Within the framework of the legal and psychological counseling center, 418 services of **free and sensitized legal assistance were provided to women who survived violence**, and 35 women received **psychotherapeutic support in recovery from violence** through 194 counseling meetings. The Foundation cooperates with a lawyer who is sensitized to work with women and pro bono helps the legal team in complex cases of violence in order to support women more strongly. During 2022, 160 sessions of **self-help groups** were held with the participation of over 130 women. Women and girls who want to be engaged in a self-help group participate in public campaigns to raise awareness about violence against women by marking important dates and other actions dedicated to the fight against violence. They shared their experiences of violence publicly through their participation in the film **"Voiceless[55]",** which was realized by Studio Theater from Zenica. Through the **Fund for Economic Empowerment of Women** in 2022, the Foundation supported women who survived violence on the way to economic independence with KM 4,897.70. The support primarily related to starting an independent business, making a profit in the field of agriculture and support in realizing the right to a pension. Five women beneficiaries of the specialized support and assistance services of the Foundation United Women managed to find **employment**. Specialized support and assistance services are not fully accessible to women with disabilities due to architectural barriers and technical deficiencies.

The Foundation Women's Center, from Trebinje provides specialized psychosocial counseling services, support through the SOS application, support of a trusted person in procedures related to violence and economic empowerment of victims of violence. During 2022, the Foundation provided 326 specialized services for 57 women, 9 girls and 3 men - 182 **psychosocial support services**, 40 services through **self-help groups**, 47 support **services of a trusted persons**, 31 **free legal aid services**, 26 support services through **SOS application** and support through **counseling center for economic empowerment** for 157 women and 27 girls and 2 men, through 498 support services. Specialized services are available to women through a direct visit to the Foundation's office, by phone, SOS application, Facebook page. During 2022, the foundation promoted the SOS application as a new type of specialized service for women victims of violence, through cooperation with 12 non-governmental organizations in B&H and the preparation of info leaflets available to women during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign.

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[55] Feature documentary film „Bez glasa (Voiceless)“, Studio Theater Zenica, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pZtq6j399g (accessed on 18.09.2023.)

5.5 Institutional Coordination Mechanisms and Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations in the Field of Prevention and Suppression of Gender Based Violence, Including the Response to Sexual Violence

Examples of good practice at the local and cantonal level were observed in the direction of strengthening the coordination and cooperation of institutions and civil society organizations, through capacity building, cooperation on the institutionalization of training modules and the provision of services to women who survived violence.

In the observed period, **activities to establish support mechanisms for victims of sexual violence through the development of protocols and tools** that serve professionals in public institutions and civil society organizations, which provide support to victims of sexual violence, **were continued**. Apart from to the already established three Crisis centers for victims of sexual violence at health institutions in the Federation of BiH, and the training of health workers in these institutions, no additional Crisis centers for victims of sexual violence have been established in other parts of BiH.

The Agency for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina holds regular meetings with non-governmental organizations working in the field of prevention and suppression of gender-based violence. Coordination activities are continuing with public institutions, at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the direction of establishing a sufficient number of Crisis centers for victims of sexual violence, in cooperation with health institutions.

During 2022, the **Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina** provided support for the establishment of municipal multisectoral teams in the municipality of Tešanj and Čapljina city, as well as support for the strengthening of cantonal coordination bodies in Canton 10, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, Tuzla Canton, Bosnia-Podrinje Canton and Una-Sana Canton, and the formation of a cantonal coordinating body in the West Herzegovina Canton. The FB&H Gender Center continuously organizes a two-day conference every year, where representatives of all ten cantons present information on the state of domestic violence at the cantonal level. Representatives of the Gender Center regularly respond to invitations from other institutions and non-governmental organizations to participate in meetings, trainings, and other events.

Civil society organizations are also involved through the activities of the **FBiH Gender Center** in the field, through the work of municipal multi-sectoral teams and cantonal coordination bodies.

An example of good cooperation practice is the cooperation with the Women's Association Seka from Goražde, where, through cooperation with the cantonal coordination body BPK Goražde, support was provided to strengthen the cantonal coordination body and **support the establishment and equipping of a safe apartment for victims of domestic violence**.

Medica from Zenica participated in several consultative meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Labor, Social Policy, and Refugees of the Zenica-Doboj Canton in 2022, and one meeting of the Coordination Body at the cantonal level. During 2022, the **Program of Measures for the Prevention, Protection and Combating Domestic Violence 2023 - 2025** was prepared and it consists of three segments: systematic data collection and coordination of actors, protection, and support for victims of violence and prevention of violence.

The Center for Women's Rights from Zenica signed Protocols on Cooperation with 15 municipal and cantonal courts throughout the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2022, while the other Protocols are in force from 2020 or 2021, and were signed with centers for social work, the Cantonal institute for the provision of free legal aid, etc.

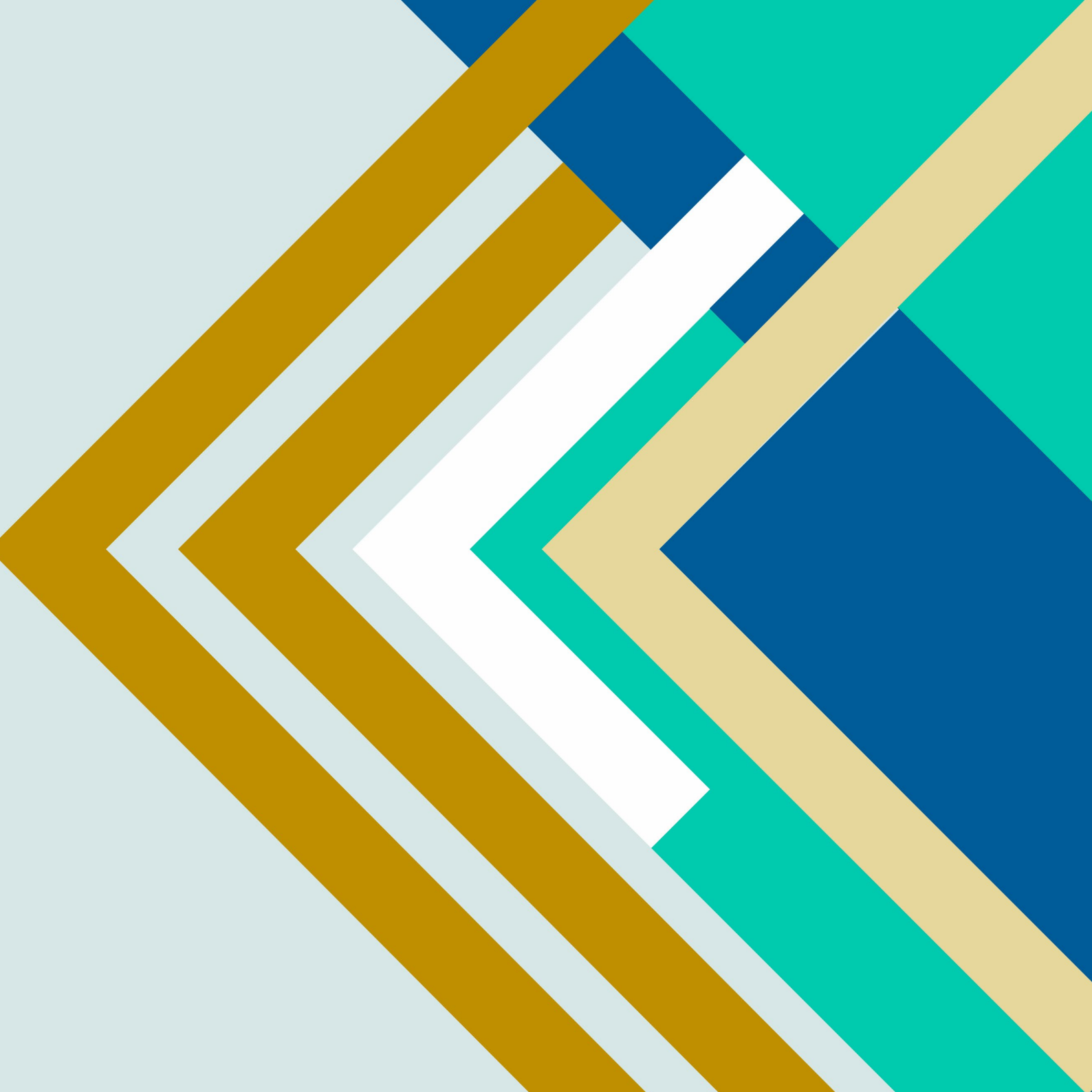
The Foundation United Women from Banja Luka contributed in 2022 in **strengthening of the capacity of coordination and cooperation bodies appointed in local self-government units to respond to domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence.** Capacity building activities were the most intensive in Banja Luka, Prnjavor, Prijedor, Gradiška, Kozarska Dubica and Novi Grad, through educations organized for protection entities at the local level, which are representatives of the local community, the police, the prosecutor's office, health institutions, social institutions, educational institutions, legal aid centers and civil society organizations.

A special support program for the independence of victims of domestic violence is being implemented in coordination and cooperation between **the Ministry of Labor, Social Policy, Displaced Persons and Refugees of Sarajevo Canton and the Foundation of Local Democracy from Sarajevo**,

The Federal Ministry of Health participated in the education organized in 2022 by the Agency for Gender Equality of B&H and the Foundation of Local Democracy from Sarajevo, bringing together experts from the field of health and other sectors with the aim of exchanging experiences with representatives of health institutions

from Spain on the topic of protection and treatment of rape victims. The agreement on cooperation between the ministry and the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina was implemented in terms of ensuring the Agency's support for the establishment of Centers for treatment of rape victims (adaptation and furnishing of space). The Federal Ministry of Health participates in the drafting of the **Protocol on Proceedings in Cases of Rape and Sexual Violence,** in cooperation with the Foundation for Local Democracy and the Agency for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH. Representatives of all three health institutions where centers for treatment of rape victims were established were actively involved in the drafting of the protocol.

The Gender Center of the Government of the Republic of Srpska developed a **training module for relevant institutions to work on cases of sexual violence**, which was implemented through training for judges and prosecutors on dealing with acts of sexual harassment, as well as through multidisciplinary training of all protection subjects on the application of the Istanbul Convention. In cooperation with the **Directorate for Police Education of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Srpska**, the Gender Center organized **pilot training for police cadets** through their regular education based on the Module. The plan is to include the Module in the curriculum of the Directorate for Police Education, and the training of other protection subjects is not planned due to insufficient financial resources. The Gender Center cooperates with non-governmental organizations through the allocation of grants, participation in public events, through the preparation of letters of support, invitations to trainings organized by the Gender Center and responding to the invitations of non-governmental organizations as educators at trainings and the like.

During 2022, the **Lara Foundation** from Bijeljina established more intensive cooperation with the **District Public Prosecutor's Office in Bijeljina,** which includes representatives of the Foundation in supporting victims of sexual violence by providing counseling and escort services during court proceedings (with the consent of the victims).

The Department of Education of the Government of the Brčko District of BiH states that activities to prevent and suppress gender-based violence are not carried out due to a lack of support through international programs/donors. The adoption of guidelines and public policy documents that would clearly regulate the area of prevention and suppression of violence against women and girls and the implementation of continuous training of professionals and officials in education in this area would contribute to the improvement of the systemic response.