



WOMEN AND MEN IN SERBIA: AT A GLANCE

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN SERBIA

The Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention adopted its **conclusions** on the implementation of recommendations in respect of Serbia welcoming the measures taken and progress achieved by Serbia. The CoP especially noted the normative progress and positive steps taken by the Ministry of Justice to collect additional data on domestic violence, including the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator; as well as the improvements in statistics on VAWG. The CoP also invited the Government to continue taking measures to implement the Convention, particularly on the basis of the conclusions of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report.

The adoption of the Action Plan for the National Strategy for Combating Gender Based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is still pending. The European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur Vladimir Bilcik's draft report on Serbia called on government to adopt the overdue action plan and funding for the strategy on violence against women and domestic violence.

As provisions of the Law on Gender Equality, which refer to use of gender-sensitive language (GSL), are to be applied as of June next year, GSL has been a hot topic for months. Even the Orthodox Church got involved and the Serbian Patriarch in his Easter message stated the church appeals "to stop the violence against Serbian language and abolish the provisions of the laws that impose that violence, especially through the unconstitutional law that imposes the so-called gender-sensitive language that is a cover for the fight against matrimony and family as divinely established sanctities and natural forms of man's personal and congregational life."

The Government of Serbia formed the Council for Gender Equality, as an expert advisory body under the Coordination Body for Gender Equality for a period of four years. Council President is Stana Bozovic, State Secretary in the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy and there are 19 Council Members.

Meanwhile, the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina adopted in April the Development Plan for the Autonomous province of Vojvodina for the period 2023-2030 which ensures gender responsiveness. Vojvodina Assembly also adopted the Programme for protection of women from domestic violence, violence in partner relations and other forms of gender-based violence in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina from 2023-2026 that is focused on improvement of status of victims of violence from multiple-discriminated groups and is targeting gender and intersectionality perspective.

In the period January-July 2023, Serbia registered an alarmingly high number of femicides - 23. Women's civil society organization FemPlatz has been working on the establishment of Femicide Watch in Serbia for three years. Most recent developments involved sending letters to MPs and caucuses as well as to all relevant ministries and government institutions seeking support for the initiative. A coalition of over 15 CSOs supporting the establishment of the Femicide Watch was formed while a report "Social and institutional responses to femicide in Albania, Montenegro and Serbia" with recommendations for each country was recently published.





COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

SAFER PUBLIC PLACES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Within the project „Safeguarding Women and Girls in Serbia“ funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), a total of 12 partnerships was established with civil society organizations and local self-governments units. Out of those 12 partnerships, 10 focus on advancing safety of women and girls in public spaces in five selected cities in Serbia, where the activities implemented by the local self-governments are in synergy with those implemented by the partner CSOs. In the period from February to July 2023, here are some of the key results of our partners, accomplished with the support of UN Women’s granting scheme:

- Center for girls held 64 empowering self-defense workshops to a total of 257 girls and women in Niš. The girls and young women who participated in the workshops reported to feel more empowered, to have increased their confidence to move in public spaces and learned how to defend themselves in a situation of violence, both physical and verbal.
- Association Mikser prepared and published the Handbook with recommendations for improving the safety of women and girls in the public spaces of the City of Kragujevac, under the title “She walks alone through the city - Safer Kragujevac for All!” The Handbook represents results of a months-long survey conducted in cooperation with almost 300 citizens of

Kragujevac and the recommendations will be included in the creation of the Strategy for the Youth of the City of Kragujevac, which is prepared by the Office for Youth of Kragujevac.

- City of Sombor adopted the Local Action Plan (LAP) for gender equality that includes measures regarding safety of women and girls in public places. A partner WCSO, Femplatz and local CSOs in Sombor have been involved in the development of the draft LAP by carrying out a baseline research.
- City of Kragujevac formed a Team for the safety of women and girls in the public space, a body formed by City Council. The body is tasked with an advisory role and majority of its members are members of the Local Council for Gender Equality.

WORKSHOPS ON GENDER AND URBAN PLANNING

Recognizing the fact that urban planning and city development require a wide range of knowledge in technical and social sciences, as well as an interdisciplinary and integrated approach, including a gendered one, month of June was marked by culmination of joint efforts of the UN Women and Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia (IAUS) on working towards safer open/urban/public spaces for women and girls. Within the project “Safeguarding Women and Girls in Serbia“, in the period between 31 May and 23 June,

IAUS organized four “future search” thematic workshops at the Urban Institute of Belgrade, convening in total 113 most relevant stakeholders of urban and spatial planning practice, architects, line-ministries, law makers, public enterprises responsible for city management and maintenance of public surfaces, citizens associations and academia in order to bring about a gendered, bottom-up input into urban planning policy. The ‘future search’ method is based on getting all relevant partners to work together, those with authority, resources, expertise, information and need and get everyone talking about the same topic and challenges. The final result of this guided participatory process, will be development of a Roadmap for the promotion of urban safety for women and girls at the national level and proposals for the amendment of legal acts in September 2023. The Roadmap will be presented on September 8 at the fifth and final thematic workshop.

ASSISTANCE TO SHELTERS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SERBIA

As part of the efforts to strengthen capacity of shelters for victims of domestic and gender-based violence, the Community of Practice (CoP) created within the project „Safeguarding Women and Girls in Serbia“, had its third meeting in Arandelovac on 8-9 June 2023. The meeting gathered professionals from all 11 currently operating shelters for

women and girls victims of domestic violence as well as partners from the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs. The objective of the meeting was on the one hand to discuss structural and functional standards in operation of shelters for women and girls and present the Draft Rulebook on quality standards in provision of accommodation for victims of domestic violence, drafted by a CSO partner Atina. On the other hand, the objective was to discuss the challenges in licensing of shelters with the representative of social protection inspection.

STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES IN PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO VAWG IN MONTENEGRO

Under the project “Improved Safety of Women in Serbia”, the UN Women supported the further strengthening of the human and organizational capacities of the Ministry of Justice in Montenegro to implement the bracelet for victims and perpetrators system (EMS). Joint efforts resulted in an initiative for signing the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior, aimed at closer cooperation in the field and greater exchange of information concerning the EMS. The UN Women provided continued technical support to the Ministry of Justice through extended engagement of five consultants with the Directorate of Probation and the Directorate for the Information System of the Judiciary and Data Security. Furthermore,



the UN Women signed contracts with two prominent women CSOs from Montenegro to implement joint awareness-raising activities with the Ministry, regarding the VAWG in Montenegro and EMS in particular.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN AND RAISING AWARENESS ON PROTECTION FROM GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE

Under the project ‘Improved Safety of Women in Serbia’, the UN Women continued to provide support to the Commissioner for Protection of Equality (CPE) to raise awareness and confidence of rural women about measures and actors responsible for protection from violence and gender-based discrimination.

47 rural women from rural Serbia have been empowered to start and advance their own small agricultural businesses. This was done through a four-day study visit to Slovenia and Switzerland where they acquired the necessary skills and knowledge on how to start different agricultural and other small businesses (from fruit and vegetable growing, nursery set up, dairy and meat animal farm establishment to eco and rural tourism), how to market it through modern methods of placing products on the market and on how to function and implement these activities when exporting, in order to gain economic independence. Additionally, this was also achieved through a training session provided by the first selected lead Women’s Association ‘Let’s Save the Village’ from Priboj in Ruma for women from the Moravi-

ca, Raska and Zlatibor regions on economic empowerment. Topics selected were dealing with business plans development, marketing, utilization of internet tools and business communication, digital competencies and entrepreneurship incentives (incentives in agriculture, role and importance of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development EU program, steps necessary to exercise the right to Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development EU incentives, role of women in the implementation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development EU program), with the presentation of inspiring examples of good practices.

Six less experienced CSOs dealing with the issues of rural women and girls’ human rights, from the Moravica and Zlatibor regions, were further capacitated by the CPE in cooperation with second partner organization, Women’s Association ‘Nadežda Petrovic - Cacak’, to provide services to rural women through support and mentoring. Training and meetings were conducted helping them to act as referrals in cases of gender-based discrimination and violence against rural women. They increased their understanding of gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls, particularly at the local level, and prevention and protection from the violation of women’s human rights. More than 200.000 women and men were reached and increased their awareness of the position of women and girls in rural areas, especially regarding gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls, through Commissioner’s continuous media cam-

paign on printed and social media.

STANDARDS FOR SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION OF WOMEN WITH EXPERIENCE OF GBV DEVELOPED

Phase II of the Regional Programme on Ending Violence against Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey ‘Implementing Norms, Changing Minds’ has come to an end with the end of July 2023. Within the last months of the programme, qualitative (functional) standards for sheltered accommodation of women with experience of GBV, developed by NGO Atina, was submitted to Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs for adoption. These standards reflect an integrated victim-oriented approach in safe houses for women and girls, victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence, as well as inter-agency standards for gender-based violence. In addition, this document clearly states the purpose of the shelter service for women victims of violence, expands the beneficiaries to those ‘who are left behind’, and points to the basic support principles when providing this specific service, such as respect and dignity, confidentiality of personal data, gender sensitivity access, non-discrimination and inclusiveness, the right to independent decision-making and respect for private and family life, safety and security, accessibility and other. It also elaborates in detail the minimum functional standards of the professional procedures, such as informed consent, admission, assessment, and puts in focus the empowerment of these women and girls, the accom-



Feminizam podrazumeva, kao nepobitnu, ideju da svako ljudsko biće jeste neprikosnoveno, i da ima prava da na puni i neometani način razvije sebe.

Ksenija Atanasijević,
filozofkinja, prva srpska
docentkinja



Proces našeg oslobođenja je smešan i tragičan, ali se kroz njega mora, jer bi svaki drugi prelaz bio negiranje naše egzistencije.

Isidora Sekulić,
književnica,
prva članica SANU





paniment of a trusted person, support in creating a long-term exit strategy, as well as support for women and girls who have survived sexual violence. A special segment refers to support for children, individual and group work with children, as well as handling of traumatic experiences. Moreover, Rules on Procedure in Emergency Situations in Shelters for Women and Children, Survivors of Domestic Violence were produced with the aim of defining mechanisms for increasing the efficiency of protection and well-being of all involved actors before the occurrence, during the duration and after the end of an emergency situation – rules that shelters lacked in the Covid-19 outbreak.

Roundtable “Better support for women and children’s victims of violence – improving the accessibility and capacities of safe houses” was organized in Belgrade on February 21, 2023, and attended by 31 participants from various state institutions and civil society organizations, who became aware of the importance of qualifying shelters as essential services to women and girls, victims of gender-based violence, and of implementing the newly developed quality standards within shelters.

101 LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE DATABASE OF LOCAL FREE LEGAL AID (FLA)

In the programme “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds”, partner Association Fenomena established a database of local free legal aid (FLA) offices in local administrations / municipalities across Serbia. Up to the end

of the project period, the database provided updated information about contact persons / offices in 101 local communities, however, the monitoring performed by the partner showed that FLA is not yet established in 11.8% of local self-governments in Serbia. The FLA webinar for 50 local public administration servants who provide FLA service was implemented with the aim to build their capacities towards better understanding the constraints and the needs of gender-based violence survivors who required free legal aid. As much as 93.5% of the participants noted that they gained better insights regarding the violence survivors’ needs and the issues they face with, while more than a half said that received information would positively reflect in their approach to gender-based violence survivors.

In addition, another capacity building training for specialized NGOs was organized with Atina from Belgrade, Oaza sigurnosti from Kragujevac, Impuls from Tutin, Peščanik from Kruševac and Ženski centar from Užice. As a result of all consultations held with specialized NGOs, Memorandums of cooperation were signed among 6 women’s NGOs and 10 lawyers.

Programme partner Roma Association of Roma Women Osvit (Osvit) successfully completed its endeavors in increasing the professional capacities and number of professional staff engaged in FLA service provision to Roma women, through its Legal Clinic organized in cooperation with the Faculty of Law in Nis. During the project implementation period, a total of 29 women accessed 31 instances of FLA services and a significant increase in the number of women who will initiate crim-

inal proceedings and utilize FLA services is expected after implementing empowerment initiatives, showcasing the on-going impact of the project beyond its formal completion. Through more than 300 completed surveys, Osvit gathered data from the field to analyze to what extent local communities in three rural areas (Matejevac, Niška Banja and Kamenica), a Roma neighborhood and a public space in the city center are familiar with this service. The data showed that 57% of respondents did not know about the existence of FLA services, 77% of respondents did not know who the service providers were, while 258 respondents answered that they did not know what the conditions are for obtaining FLA service. The licensed SOS service provided continuous support to women who have experienced violence, and until the end of the project more than 100 calls were received, providing beneficiaries with information regarding their rights, legal regulations, and the roles of institutions in ensuring their protection. With the aim of enhancing the project’s visibility and advocating for free legal aid, Osvit co-organized the Women’s March in Niš, held on March 4, 2023, as part of the “March 8, Women’s Day” campaign. The march witnessed the enthusiastic involvement of over 60 activists from the southern Serbia, garnering significant support from both public and the media.

CSO Roma Women Center Bibija and its successful model of economic re-integration of women survivors of violence from marginalized groups was included in the global movie about ending violence against women and girls.

UN WOMEN AND NETWORK OF WOMEN IN THE POLICE START COOPERATION

To provide a framework for cooperation between the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in Serbia and the Network of Women in the Police of the Republic of Serbia on promoting gender equality and empowering women in the police and improving the safety of women in the entire society, Letter of intent was signed on 4 July. As part of this cooperation, the regional conference on women in police and leadership, challenges and good practices, will be organized on 13 October 2023 in Belgrade.



GENDER RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE

DEVELOPED COMPREHENSIVE STUDY „WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SERBIA - 10 YEARS LATER“

A decade after the first study on women's entrepreneurship in Serbia, UN Women in Serbia supported the development of another study aimed to review the state of women's entrepreneurship - to identify changes, achievements, challenges and the potential of women's entrepreneurship that future policies should focus on. The Study was developed, within the project "Support to Priority Actions for Gender Equality in Serbia II", funded by the European Union, and with the support of a consultancy company (SeCons) and in partnership with the Ministry of Economy and Serbian Business Registers Agency. The recommendations are included in the draft of the new National Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEE) Strategy and will be used to advance the support programs funded by the Government.

The study was presented in June 2023 at the Women Entrepreneurship Conference - framework and opportunities for empowerment that was jointly organized with German Embassy and German Development Cooperation Agency. The goal was to initiate dialogue on Women entrepreneurship and bring together impulses from different perspectives from Serbia and Germany to discuss how to improve framework conditions and opportunities for women empowerment. The conference gathered all relevant stakeholders from the Government, international community and women entrepreneurs.

DEVELOPED ANALYSIS ON THE POSITION AND PROSPECTS OF YOUNG WOMEN NEET

Within the same project, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs, Analysis of the position of young women not included in employment, education, or training (NEET) was developed. The aim was to assess policies and develop gender responsive labour market measures to facilitate the work life balance and employability of young women. The findings and recommendations were shared with the Government Working Group developing the future EU funded Youth Initiative Program.

INTEGRATED GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO THE IPA MULTI-ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES 2024-2027

As part of the "Support to Priority Actions for Gender Equality in Serbia II" project, UN Women is supporting the Ministry of EU Integration and national IPA Units in mainstreaming of the IPA programs and EU integration process by implementing capacity building activities and by providing expert advice and assistance on inclusion of gender equality considerations and antidiscrimination policy standards in each sector that is a subject of support by EC. In line with the EU and Government of Serbia timeline and calendar of programming support was provided in the development of Multi-annual Operational Programmes (2024-

2027) for Human Resource and Social Inclusion and Green Agenda. This was done by organizing guided training for the development of the SWOT and situation analysis, followed by workshops and meetings related to the development of specific activities jointly with MEI and cohesion policy project and consultations with civil society.

SUPPORT THROUGH SMALL GRANTS TO 5 NEW CSOs

Under the same project, as a result of the selection process within the Call for Proposal (CFP) for Support to active engagement of women to influence development, implementation and monitoring of gender sensitive policies and programmes (CFP No. 2022-01 GEF II) the following CSOs were selected: Association Amity, Belgrade Centre for Human rights, Save the Village Priboj, FemPlatz, and Women's Center Uzice. Their initiatives will be supported with RSD 17,5 million and at least 1,000 women throughout Serbia will be direct beneficiaries. Through empowering women to actively participate in decision-making process and creation of evidence-based reports and recommendations as a tool for advocacy measures towards authorities, CSOs will support development and implementation of gender sensitive policies and programmes in their communities. More concretely, women will develop recommendations and advocate for improving the position of rural women, development of women led rural household tourism, development

and improvement of existing social protection services for vulnerable groups of women, and improvement of the procedure and treatment of the patients in induced abortion procedure etc. Kick off seminar for new RPs was organized to introduce them with the rules on implementation, reporting, monitoring and visibility.

As the projects are in the beginning stage of implementation, activities are mainly focused on conducting necessary procurement procedures, planning activities, mobilizing women beneficiaries and development of the project's visual identity. Main results achieved so far, include:

- developed comprehensive expert Report on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Serbia for 2021-2022, [available on FemPlatz website](#) for download.
- 40 rural women from southwestern Serbia increased their knowledge on advocacy and how to influence local public policies.
- 40 women from Morava and Rasina districts improved their knowledge about social and economic rights.
- procured equipment necessary for improvement of the production of the association Save the village Priboj.
- developed draft expert analysis in the field of protection of patients' rights and realization of the right to health care.



ENHANCED DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN CSOs AND GENDER MECHANISMS AT ALL LEVELS

As part of the activities in the project “Support to Priority Actions for Gender Equality in Serbia II”, UN Women supports establishment and/or enhancement of the cooperation between women’s CSOs and institutions, especially gender mechanisms at all levels. In that respect, a series of thematic meetings and events was organized in the reporting period to enable exchange of knowledge and defining actions and measures that address adequately gender equality challenges. In the first half of 2023, four thematic meetings have been organized gathering around 100 women.

- 01/03/23 Roundtable dedicated to the position of rural women in Priboj municipality on the occasion of the Marking of the International Women’s Day. Roundtable was attended by high level officials - Ms. Darija Kisić, the minister of Family Welfare and Demography and vice-president of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, Ms. Stana Božović, state secretary in the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography and president of the expert group of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, and Mr Lazar Rvović, Mayor of Priboj. The event was organized by UN Women and Women’s Association “Save the village” Priboj.
- 16/05/23 Roundtable on Economic Empowerment of Women and Women Entrepreneurship in Morava was organized

in Cacak. At the event the current state was presented from the perspective of the civil sector, public institutions (implemented measures and their effects, what are the plans for the future) and from the point of view of the beneficiaries. Program for women’s entrepreneurship of the Ministry of Economy and the social entrepreneurship have been presented as additional opportunities and incentives for women’s economic empowerment. The final part of the event was an exhibition of products of women’s associations. UN Women organized the event in partnership with the Association of Business women Nadezda Petrovic from Cacak. CSOs from Morava, Rasina and Zlatibor districts were present at the event.

- 31/05/23 Tribune on Gender Equality on the Occasion of the National Gender Equality Day in Petrovac na Mlavi. On the National Gender Equality Day, UN Women supported the Coordination Body for Gender Equality in organizing the tribune dedicated to gender equality and women’s empowerment as the main topics. Deputy President of the Coordination body for GE opened the tribune and representatives of the Municipality and women CSOs participated in discussion. Part of the event is also an exhibition of products of rural women’s associations from Petrovac na Mlavi.
- 06/06/2023 Roundtable Economic Empowerment of Women and Women Entrepreneurship in Banat was organized by UN Women and Zrenjanin Educational Center in Zrenjanin. The event was opened

by Nina Mitic, assistant minister responsible for gender equality in the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue and Djendji Selesi deputy of the provincial secretary responsible for gender equality. Representatives from 10 rural women associations, members of the Network ‘Women’s divan’ participated at the event. Social entrepreneurship was one of the topic that mostly interested women from CSOs.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING OF AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF VOJVODINA’S DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In the project Transformative Financing for Gender Equality: towards more Transparent, Inclusive and Accountable Governance in the Western Balkans, funded by SIDA, GRB implementation continues to expand in line with the Budget System Law, Gender Equality Law and Annual GRB Plans issued by the Minister of Finance and Heads of Finances at local level. National, provincial and local governments continue to apply GRB and integrate gender equality principles in public financing processes, thus improving the position of women and men in various sectors. As a result of cooperation between UN Women, Ministry of Finance and the Provincial Secretariat of Finance, budgets of 73 institutions at national and provincial levels (out of 90) introduced gender perspective in 108 budget programmes and contributed to the improvement of gender equality through 399 budget objectives and more than 750 gen-

der responsive indicators. These institutions include all line ministries and provincial secretariats, as well as independent bodies and commissioners and various directorates.

SOCIAL DIALOGUES – USE OF GENDER SENSITIVE LANGUAGE

Bearing in mind legal obligations according to the newly adopted Gender Equality Law, gender sensitive language will be mandatory by 2024. Based on its mandate, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue organized three social dialogues (Belgrade, Novi Pazar, Novi Sad) in the period from March till June, with the relevant experts and interested parties, and opened discussion and knowledge exchange about the needs, implementation and use of the gender sensitive language. These activities were conducted in the frame of the project “Support to Priority Actions for Gender Equality in Serbia II”.

CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING (GRB)

As national, provincial and local governments continue to integrate gender equality principles in public financing processes, the GRB implementation expands further in line with the Budget System Law and the Gender Equality Law, in the framework of the project Transformative Financing for Gen-



der Equality: towards more Transparent, Inclusive and Accountable Governance in the Western Balkans, funded by SIDA. In order to meet 2024 deadline for full GRB implementation, as proscribed by the Budget System Law, the Ministry of Finance has planned for inclusion of all budget users at national level in GRB implementation in 2024 budget. At provincial level, all 25 budget users initiated the development of plans for promotion of gender equality, and UN Women supported this process through capacity development and production of guidelines and checklists. UN Women continues to support GRB implementation at local level, and has established cooperation with two cities (Uzice and Zajecar), one Belgrade municipality (Lazarevac) and two LSGUs (Trstenik and Topola), in addition to nine municipalities and cities supported in 2022. Besides increasing their capacities to implement GRB, these municipalities and city administrations will be enabled to plan and budget for gender sensitive measures and activities based on the findings of sectoral gender analysis, while their knowledge and skills will be improved through additional trainings and mentoring.

Through training organized by UN Women in partnership with the Novi Sad School of

Journalism, 20 journalists learned about the importance of financing for gender equality and how GRB can be used as a tool to improve everyday quality of life for women and men.

To support development of evidence-based measures and programmes, UN Women initiated budget gender analysis of measures to support women's and social entrepreneurship of the Provincial Secretariat of Economy and Tourism. Besides analysis of document, UN Women organized focus group with women entrepreneurs who discussed their experiences and challenges in accessing support measures, and provided recommendation for their improvement. Additionally, UN Women initiated ex-post analysis of the support measures of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, to enable better targeting and adaptation to women's needs and specific positions.

UN WOMEN ASSISTANCE TO THE STATE AUDIT INSTITUTION (SAI)

Within the same project., UN Women continue to support the State Audit Institution of the Republic of Serbia (SAI) in auditing gender equality and GRB. Together with 4 SAI

from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, Serbian SAI signed the MoU to conduct parallel regional audit on SDG 5, with focus on GRB implementation. UN Women is supporting this process through organization of MoU signing and regional meetings, as well as provision of expert support.

As a continuation of work done on GRB and climate finance methodology developed in 2022 and its localization, UN Women supported the City Administrations of Kragujevac and Uzice, and Belgrade Municipality Lazarevac to apply gender responsive and climate financing tracking guide with Checklist for determining gender/climate significance of budget programmes/projects/objectives and indicators.

Being recognized as one of the examples of good European practice in GRB implementation, Serbian institutions were visited by the delegation from Belarus, as part of the GRB study visit. The study visit participants learned about GRB practices of the Ministry of Finance and the Provincial Secretariat of Finance, the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, Provincial Ombudsperson and UN Women.

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS TEAM



WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES- UNPRPD INCEPTION PROJECT SERBIA

In Serbia, an estimated 8 per cent of the total population — nearly 600,000 people, the majority of them women and girls — lives with some kind of disability. Yet, they are all facing different challenges. To enable full and effective participation of persons with disabilities, ensure the inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities and address gender inequality and advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities, UN Women has been spearhead-

ing the kick-off phase of the joint project on disability in coordination with UNDP, OHCHR, UNICEF, ILO, and UNFPA. The Situational Analysis Report was approved in the validation workshop in cooperation with The National Organization of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia (NOOIS) after which a pro-doc was finalized based on Situational Analysis and validation workshop findings. The project's goals and activities are in line with The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), CEDAW and national framework on persons with disabilities, and gender equality and women empowerment.

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Čovek je u stanju da
u svojoj imaginaciji
zamisli bezgraničnu
sreću i trebalo bi da
može da shvati i
beskonačnost
prostora.

Mileva Marić-Ajnštajn,
srpska fizičarka,
pionirka feminističkog
pokreta





PEER MENTORING PROGRAM TO EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE KICKSTARTED

The Peer Mentoring Program implemented by UNFPA and UN Women with the support of the Italian Embassy in Belgrade and endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism and Youth, commenced in January 2023 with an aim to expand opportunities for young people to engage at the local level and promote topics such as human rights, gender equality, etc. The core of the project is mentoring support that experienced young people, members of the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) of the UN in Serbia provide to their peers at the local level, in 6 municipalities selected jointly with UNFPA and UN Women.

Kickoff event was organized on 24 April 2023 in the Italian Embassy in Belgrade to bring together key partners to advocate jointly for greater youth engagement in Ser-

bia and give voice to young people. Opening remarks were given by H.E. Mr. Luca Gori, the Ambassador of Italy, Ms. Françoise Jacob, UN Resident Coordinator and Ms. Ivana Antonijevic, Assistant Minister in the Ministry for Tourism and Youth.

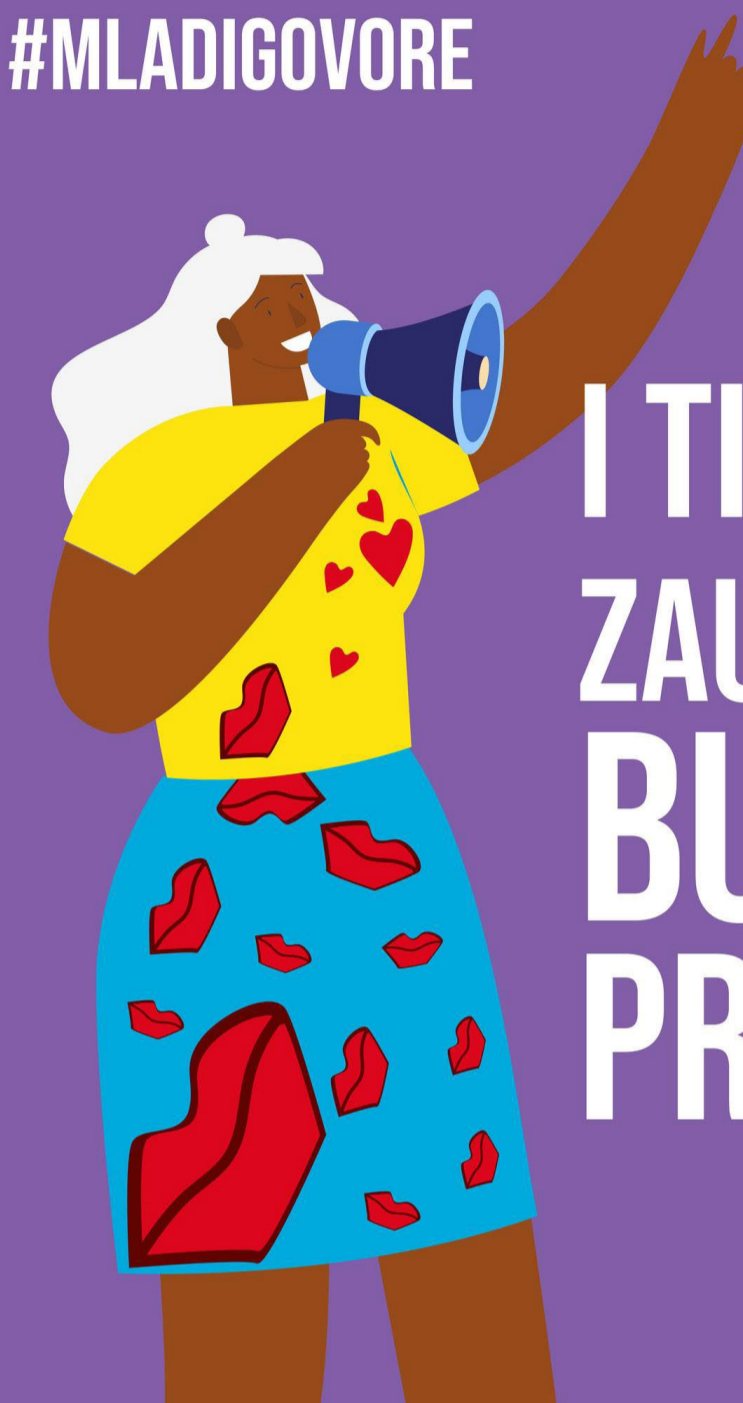
First activity was The Training for Trainers (ToT) for YAG members held on 1 and 2 April to strengthen the capacities of YAG members to be mentors and provide support to their peers. During the course of the ToT, six municipalities were identified for further cooperation within the project: Knjazevac, Sombor, Bajina Basta, Sremski Karlovci, Novi Pazar, and Kragujevac.

The first activity at the local level was roll-out training for interested youth, organized in all six municipalities, namely in Sremski Karlovci (17 June), Knjazevac (24 June), Novi Pazar (24 June), Bajina Basta (26 June), Kragujevac (1 July) and Sombor (6

July) about gender equality, environmental issues, anti-discrimination, media literacy, youth engagement and social entrepreneurship, respectively. These trainings will be followed with the local initiatives designed by young people, participants of the roll-out training supported by their mentors from the YAG, with the aim to promote human rights and the most important aspects of the topics covered during the trainings, as well as to initiate discussions in their communities.

The first activity created by young people at the local level was part of the celebration of World Population Day in Sremski Karlovci on July 10. Young people organized a workshop trying to express their perception about the current status of gender equality in Serbia through art and subsequent discussion on complex topics such as: gender wage gap, menstrual poverty, unequal division of housework, and gender-based violence.

#MLADIGOVORE



I TI SE PITAŠ!
ZAUZMI STAV I
BUDI DEO
PROMENE!

#MLADIGOVORE

SLOBODA
JEDNAKOST
~~BRATSTVO~~

UKLJUČIVANJE





GENERAL

UNFPA Serbia signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the office of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality on 07 July 2023. The MoU will create a framework for joint efforts in advancing the implementation of various measures which should prevent all forms, types and cases of discrimination, protect the equality in all spheres and enhance fulfillment of potentials among men and women creating an equal society. UNFPA and the Commissioner for Protection of Equality will continue with joint advocacy work to further advance gender equality and improve the status and position of all women and girls related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights, elimination of gender based violence, promotion of bodily integrity and autonomy in real and online space. Also, future activities will include work on key demographic issues with particular emphasis on youth and older persons. One of joint initiatives that will continue in the following period is the body-right campaign and work with young men and women to respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and use all available prevention and response mechanisms.

SUPPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUTH STRATEGY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

UNFPA Serbia CO partnered with the Ministry of Tourism and Youth to support the process of developing a three-year Action Plan for the

implementation of the new Youth Strategy 2023-2030. The Action Plan was created in a broad consultative process with participation of representatives of relevant ministries, institutions, youth, the civil sector and international organizations. On July 6, 2023, the Government of Serbia adopted the Action Plan for the period from 2023 to 2025. The Action Plan operationalizes the general and specific goals set by the Youth Strategy, defines priority activities and the necessary resources that will enable young people to fully reach their potential, actively participate in society, contributing not only to their own development, but also to the development of the entire society. The Action Plan follows the foundations laid by the Youth Strategy in promoting, strengthening and achieving gender equality through the fulfillment of all the potentials of young women and men in the Republic of Serbia.

YOUTH WELLBEING INDEX DEVELOPMENT

UNFPA in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Youth and Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation have continued the development of a comprehensive Youth Wellbeing Index, reflective of the structure and the objectives of the new Youth Strategy 2023-2030 which will be used as a tool to monitor the status of wellbeing among young men and women in the Republic of Serbia and progress in the implementation of youth policies at national and local level. Methodology of the Index including proposed indicators (129 reference at the national and 118 at the local level) was reviewed and verified by the special multise-

ctoral Working Group consisting of all relevant national counterparts, institutions, and CSOs. Proposed indicators were tested during May 2023 in 16 municipalities jointly selected with UNFPA, Ministry and the Working Group, to determine if data is available and if data source is stable. Proposed indicators are related to all domains of the adopted Youth Strategy (2023-2030) including employment, financial stability, participation, health safety, social wellbeing, youth work, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, mental health, etc. Next phase of the process will include adaptation and confirmation of the proposed indicators, capacity building of LGs, data collection for the zero measurement and its processing. First results will be available in 2024 for the initial year.

STATUS OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) AND THEIR FAMILIES

In April 2023, UNFPA Serbia CO and the Institute of Mental Health presented the findings of a Report "Status of Support available to Young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families". Report is the first result of the initiative of the UNFPA and the Ministry of Tourism and Youth to improve the status of young people with ASD. The initiative was from the beginning supported by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. The research included an assessment of gaps in support services, needs and challenges, and the perceptions and attitudes of parents/guardians





(mainly mothers) towards the existing support system. Some of the main findings of the Report indicate that only a small proportion of parents claim to have attended education about their children's needs. Most parents report socio economic difficulties - financial problems, leaving work or working part-time due to parental responsibilities. Parents cite adequate health care for their children as the biggest challenge, followed by protection of children's rights and adequate education. The findings of this research provide guidelines for the next phase of research that should enable accurate mapping of the existing support network across the country.

RAISING AWARENESS ON TFGBV AND BODYRIGHT CAMPAIGN "OWN YOUR BODY ONLINE!" CONTINUES

The Campaign "Own your body online" initiated jointly with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality in 2022 continued in 2023 through peer to peer activities at the local level. The initiative aims at building the capacity of youth, members of Youth panelists of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality to be peer educators on technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and available prevention and response mechanisms. Youth panelists went through Training for Trainers (ToT) on "Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence - protection against discrimination and various forms of violence" on 18 May 2023 and continued to transfer knowledge through peer education activities in Kragujevac, Vran-

je and Bujanovac by the end of June. The campaign was adapted to the circumstances after the tragic events that befell Serbia at the beginning of May. In the fall, the continuation of peer workshops is planned in Novi Sad, Ruma and Belgrade.

IMPROVING THE KNOWLEDGE OF ROMA WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SERBIA ABOUT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

In May 2023, UNFPA Serbia CO jointly with BIBIJA Roma Women Center launched a new programme to enhance sexual and reproductive health and rights among Roma women and girls. Main goal of the project is to contribute to the improvement of the health condition of Roma women and girls, through increasing health literacy, identification of barriers that they are facing in the access to health care services and achieving better health outcomes. The project entails two key activities. First is related to capacity building of Roma activists - local educators through Training of Trainers for improving their knowledge on sexual and reproductive health and rights that was conducted in June 2023, and provision of continuous professional support in this area. The second is age-appropriate education of Roma girls and women on sexual and reproductive health and rights through a series of workshops in 6 selected Roma settlements in 3 city municipalities of the city of Belgrade - Zemun, Cukarica and Palilula.

IMPROVING SRHR OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH INCREASING THEIR CAPACITY FOR ADVOCACY

In mid-2023 UNFPA jointly with IP ...Iz kruga Vojvodina launched a project with an overall objective to empower women, adolescents, young people and marginalized groups, including women and young persons with disabilities to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and live free from discrimination and any type of violence. The project is financed through *We decide* fund and will last until the end of 2023.

The project is contributing to the implementation of the innovative mechanisms and capacities for systemic engagement and participation of women and young persons with disabilities in development of policies and programs for the protection from gender based violence and improvement of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. It consists of several educational sessions delivered by women with disability to service providers with an aim to deconstruct prejudices regarding disability and to further empower professionals to perform their duties with full integrity and in a comprehensive manner. Activities will include capacity building of women with disabilities to advocate for their rights and improving accessibility of the information materials regarding SRHR and GBV of women with disability.



“
Humorom
se branim
od zla.”

Sofija Jovanović,
prva srpska pozorišna
i filmska rediteljka



RESEARCH ON WOMEN'S PERCEPTION ABOUT MATERNAL HEALTHCARE QUALITY AND CHILDBIRTH EXPERIENCE

UNFPA is conducting a comprehensive analysis on the women's perception of the maternal healthcare services and childbirth experience before, during and after childbirth in the last 3 years, which would include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research includes several steps in assessing the current situation: thorough review of published studies, as well as review of public discourse about the related terms such as "respectful birth", "obstetric violence" that should provide insight into how maternal care is perceived in Serbia, with a particular focus on the quality of the maternal health and childbirth experience; and a qualitative field research in 5 cities/research sites through the the focus group discussions (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, Novi Pazar and Čačak). Final report will provide a set of recommendations for actionable policies and advocacy in Serbia in the field of maternal healthcare and respectful childbirth. The results and recommendations will be presented to the decision makers and general public for further advocacy actions in Q4.

THE SECOND NATIONAL TRANSFER ACCOUNTS (NTA) ANALYSIS CONDUCTED

In cooperation with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, UNFPA conducted the second National Transfer Accounts (NTA) analysis, based on the 2019 data. The goal of the NTA analysis is to improve the understanding of how population growth and changing population age structure influence economic growth, gender, public finances, and other important features of macro-economy. With the results of the NTA analysis, it is possible to show the importance of ensuring adequate social protection systems and investing in youth and human capital development. Comparing the first and the second NTA analysis, data shows that young persons were able to finance their consumption for a longer period of time in 2019 (34 years in 2019 vs. 31 years in 2018). As for older persons, the period of dependency began at the age of 58 in 2018, while in 2019 people became dependent on others at the age of 60. This is also in line with the fact that the legal retirement age for women was increased in 2019 compared to 2018. This age is planned to rise gradually until 2032 when the legal retirement age for women will be 65,

the same as for men. Based on the second NTA analysis, UNFPA has started the development of a policy brief focusing on the field of education in Serbia. The policy brief will cover very important areas in the field of education, such as building human capital, LNOB groups including disadvantaged women and girls, etc.

THE EX-ANTE ANALYSIS FOR THE STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING THE POSITION OF OLDER PERSONS DEVELOPED

In line with current strategic priorities and reforms that the Government of the Republic of Serbia is implementing in the domain of population policies, sexual and reproductive health and aging, UNFPA is supporting the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography (MFWD) in drafting three separate strategies: Strategy for improving the position of older persons, Birth Promotion Strategy, and Strategy on preserving and improving reproductive health. During the reporting period, the MFWD established a multisectorial working group and initiated ex-ante analysis for the new Strategy on preserving and improving reproductive health which is ongoing.

The developed ex-ante analysis for the Strategy for improving the position of older persons in Serbia contains all data and information indicating specific forms of social and economic discrimination which particularly affect women over 65. Data shows that women aged 65 and above represent nearly 95% of the total number of family pension recipients for ages 65 and above, while in the total number of family pension recipients of all ages, they have a share of nearly 70%. In the analysis, particular attention is paid to women over 75 years of age, women in rural areas, and women of lowest education levels who are much more exposed to the risk of poverty. Determined efforts are required to achieve equal opportunities and prevent old-age poverty from predominantly affecting women. In addition, participation of both men and women is encouraged, by ensuring equal access to rights and opportunities for the benefit of all citizens.



GENDER AND SALW¹ – INCREASING THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES FOR EFFECTIVE PREVENTION AND COMBATING OF THE MISUSE OF FIREARMS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

UNDP SEESAC continued providing comprehensive support to authorities in the region to effectively combat the use of firearms in domestic violence through: conducting the regional analysis of the institutional response to the use of firearms in domestic violence; developing a tool for gender-sensitive firearm license approval and training on its use and developing a tool for first-line responders to address risks related to the presence of firearms in domestic violence and provision of training on its use.

To facilitate implementing those activities, UNDP SEESAC convened two regional meetings, which contributed to further increasing understanding of critical challenges in preventing the misuse of firearms in domestic violence:

- The second meeting of the Regional Working Group for the Development of a Tool for Gender Sensitive Firearms License Approval was organised in the first half of May 2023 in Durres, Albania. The meeting brought together twenty rep-

resentatives from the region, including officers dealing with firearms license approval and representatives from the police with practical experience in conducting background checks for issuing firearms licenses for civilians. The participants proposed practical solutions to the main challenges identified.

- The second meeting of the Regional Working Group for the Prevention of the Use of Firearms in Domestic Violence through Risk Assessment took place in Durres in the second half of May. During the meeting, members of the working groups discussed the main concerns related to preventing this misuse of firearms in domestic violence as outlined by the draft Tool mentioned above.

Best practice examples developed within the UNDP Serbia project *Reduce Risks Increase Safety* were shared with the participants from the region.

To contribute to achieving ethical reporting on gender-based violence incidents with firearms, UNDP SEESAC organised a three-day Regional training on ethical media reporting for eighteen journalists from the Western Balkans on the issue. The training was organised in Belgrade in March, and was conducted by three journalists from the network Journalists Against Violence Against Women.



¹ These activities were implemented within the framework of the regional project Support for Enhancing the Fight Against the Illegal Possession, Misuse, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the Western Balkans funded by the European Union through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II).



SUPPORT TO THE MINISTRIES OF DEFENCE (MODs) AND ARMED FORCES (AFs) IN THE WESTERN BALKANS IN IMPLEMENTING UNSCR 1325 AND INCREASING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE MILITARY²

The project is in its final phase, and the activities are focused on ensuring the sustainability of activities focusing on integrating a gender perspective in the military. To that end, three regional events were organised, which included the participation of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) of the Republic of Serbia.

- Two representatives of the MoD of Serbia participated in the **First regional meeting of the Western Balkan Gender Advisers and Gender Coordinators in Ministries of Defence and Armed Forces**, which was organised at the request of MoDs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia. The meeting was held in March in Budva, Montenegro, and it gathered nine Gender Advisers and Gender Coordinators to enable networking and experience sharing among the gender advisors in the military who have a pivotal role in supporting the implementation of the United Nations' Women, Peace and Security Agenda.
- Twenty-two gender trainers from the MoDs

and AFs from the Western Balkans, including six representatives of the MoD of Serbia and SAF, met in Vršac in May 2023 at the **7th Meeting** of the Regional Network of Gender Military Trainers. The main focus of the meeting was finalising the regional online gender-awareness course. The online basic gender awareness course represents one of the major results of decade-long regional cooperation on gender mainstreaming in the Security Sector Reform (SSR) in the Western Balkans.

- In June, three representatives of the MoD of Serbia and the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) participated in the regional **Key Leaders Seminar on Gender-Responsive Leadership**, alongside the eight representatives of the MoDs and AFs from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. The regional Panel Discussion took place at the premises of UNDP Serbia. Mr. Yakup Beris, UNDP Resident Representative in Serbia, greeted the participants, emphasising the importance of partnership with the MoDs in contributing to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. He congratulated the leaders who completed the Gender Coaching Programme delivered by UNDP SEESAC. The participants discussed the role of gender-responsive leadership in achieving people-centered security and zero tolerance towards discrimination and sexual harassment in the

workplace. The discussions also focused on integrating a gender perspective in military education as a prerequisite for creating and sustaining modern, accountable defence institutions.

As part of operationalisation of the recommendations from the **Regional Baseline Study on Integrating a Gender Perspective in Military Education and Training**, two activities were in focus of the MoD of Serbia and UNDP SEESAC in the reporting period:

- In June 2023, the **Gender Coach Programme** (GCP) with the Deputy Dean of the Military Academy was successfully finalised. Over the period of six months, UNDP SEESAC delivered tailor-made knowledge content through one-on-one sessions, aiming to support further integration of a gender perspective in military education.
- The MoD of Serbia completed a **comprehensive revision of the Gender Training Manual** (published for the first time in 2014). At the session held in early July at UNDP Serbia premises, five representatives of the MoD and AFs of Serbia discussed the final comments with the UNDP SEESAC team. The participants agreed on the concluding steps for finalising the updated Gender Training Manual by the end of August 2023.

² UNDP SEESAC's project Strengthening of Regional Cooperation on Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans (WinMil) provides support to four Ministries of Defence (MoDs) and Armed Forces (AFs) in the Western Balkans (WB) in implementing UNSCR 1325 and increasing gender equality in the military. Partners include MoDs and AFs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Republic of Serbia. Funding support is provided by the Kingdom of Norway and the Slovak Republic. The project is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (Project duration: from 15 December 2018 – 31 December 2023).



INTEGRATED RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SERBIA III

Striving to enable women and girls, including those from vulnerable groups, to live free from discrimination and violence, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP, with the support of the Swedish Government, worked together with the government of Serbia to implement the [Integrated Response to Violence against Women and Girls in Serbia III](#) joint initiative.

From October 2020 to end of March 2023, the initiative mobilized state bodies and institutions, non-governmental organizations, local communities and media to:

- Empower survivors and ensure long-term support by overcoming barriers to reporting violence, improving multi-agency response and ensuring availability of specialized support services.
- End harmful practices affecting children, especially girls, through advocating for regulations banning child marriage, as well as challenging violent disciplining of children through promotion of non-violent parenting methods.
- Increase understanding about unacceptability of violence through engaging youth, improving media reporting and working with men to change violent behaviour.

ADVOCACY

- Full legal ban of child marriage and physical disciplining of children was initiated. By supporting the advocacy activities of the National Coalition to End Child Marriage, amendments to the Family Law include provisions banning physical disciplining of children during care and upbringing, as well as preventing courts from approving child marriage. The amended law draft is envisaged for public discussion in the upcoming period, as [announced](#) by the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography.
- The new [Provincial Program](#) on combating and prevention of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence 2023-2026, adopted in April 2023, will ensure that good practices established in multi-ethnic Vojvodina are continued. It includes measures to improve cooperation with specialized women's CSOs and strengthen multi-agency response to violence involving survivors from vulnerable groups.

RESEARCH AND TRAINING

- Counselling on applying positive parenting and non-violent child disciplining methods is now available to parents so that new generations do not adopt violence as a model of behaviour. This has been enabled with the [help of social welfare professionals](#) from more than 70 municipalities who have been [trained](#) to provide support to parents.
- [Research](#) on obstacles faced by women, including from vulnerable groups, on reporting domestic violence, confirmed that support of family and friends is one of the main factors that encourages women to report violence they are exposed to. The [research report](#) was implemented together with the Commissioner for Protection of Equality and shows that women have the greatest trust in healthcare institutions and safehouses and the police, and least trust in municipality free legal aid. More than half of interviewed women who had asked for help from institutions, were satisfied with the response and support received. Fear of the perpetrator, shame due to the experienced violence, fear of condemnation from those close to them, as well as unfavorable econom

ic situation of the victim and distrust in institutions are the main reasons behind not reporting violence.

- The on-line training of healthcare professionals on responding to GBV was continued, through the Faculty of Medicine [online learning platform](#). More than 200 professionals have enrolled for the programme since its launch in March of last year. When it comes to patients, an informative [video](#) was developed to inform them on how they can report violence to their doctor and what support health professionals can provide in response to GBV.
- Thanks to the 4 existing Centres for Victims of Sexual Violence, supported through the initiative, a total of 65 women who were exposed to sexual violence received support from October 2020 to March 2023. These centres make sure that women receive medical treatment of injuries, but also vital psychosocial support that helps them overcome trauma and make decisions about further steps. Besides ensuring the operation of existing centres, the establishment of 2 new centres in Pančevo and Kraljevo has been initiated, so that this service is available to a wider scope of people in the country.



REDUCING FIREARMS MISUSE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SUICIDE

Firearms in the home increase the risk of a fatal outcome of domestic violence and serious injuries, while firearms are often used for intimidation, threats, psychological and sexual violence. Women are the majority of victims of firearms-enabled violence that occurs in a domestic or partner-relationship context. Firearms are also the most commonly used method for committing suicide. Although there is a decrease in the suicide rate in Serbia, data indicate that men commit suicide in many more cases than women.

The health system comes into contact with a large number of citizens and can have relevant insights both into the condition of patients and their family dynamics, and has an important role, but also legal obligations in preventing domestic violence, as well as firearms misuse. Bearing this in mind, through the „Reduce Risk – Increase Safety II“ initiative, UNDP in Serbia mapped the opportunities and challenges of the health system for a more effective recognition and response to the risk of firearms misuse for violence and suicide.

Mobilizing state representatives, relevant institutions, health professionals from different cities throughout Serbia (including general practitioners, psychologists and psychiatrists), non-governmental organizations, communities and the media around firearms misuse prevention, activities especially focused on analyzing less explored issues of concern and finding strategies to reach at-risk population groups. Part of this is **research into the characteristics of intimate partner femicide-suicide cases committed with firearms**,

conducted to help better understanding of specific circumstances of this phenomenon and preventing future cases.

Based on concrete dilemmas and questions of healthcare professionals regarding their role in prevention of domestic violence, including that committed with firearms, a **guidebook** was prepared to support doctors and other healthcare staff in providing support to victims and participating in multi-agency response to domestic violence.

Stigma, misunderstanding, stereotypes and ignorance are the main challenges in suicide prevention. Media can be powerful allies in changing this situation. This is why **guidelines for ethical media reporting on suicide** were prepared, to help journalists contribute to an adequate understanding of the complexity of suicide, including suicide committed with firearms and to build awareness and responsibility in the field of mental health.

MAKING GENDER PART OF SDG INVESTOR MAPPING

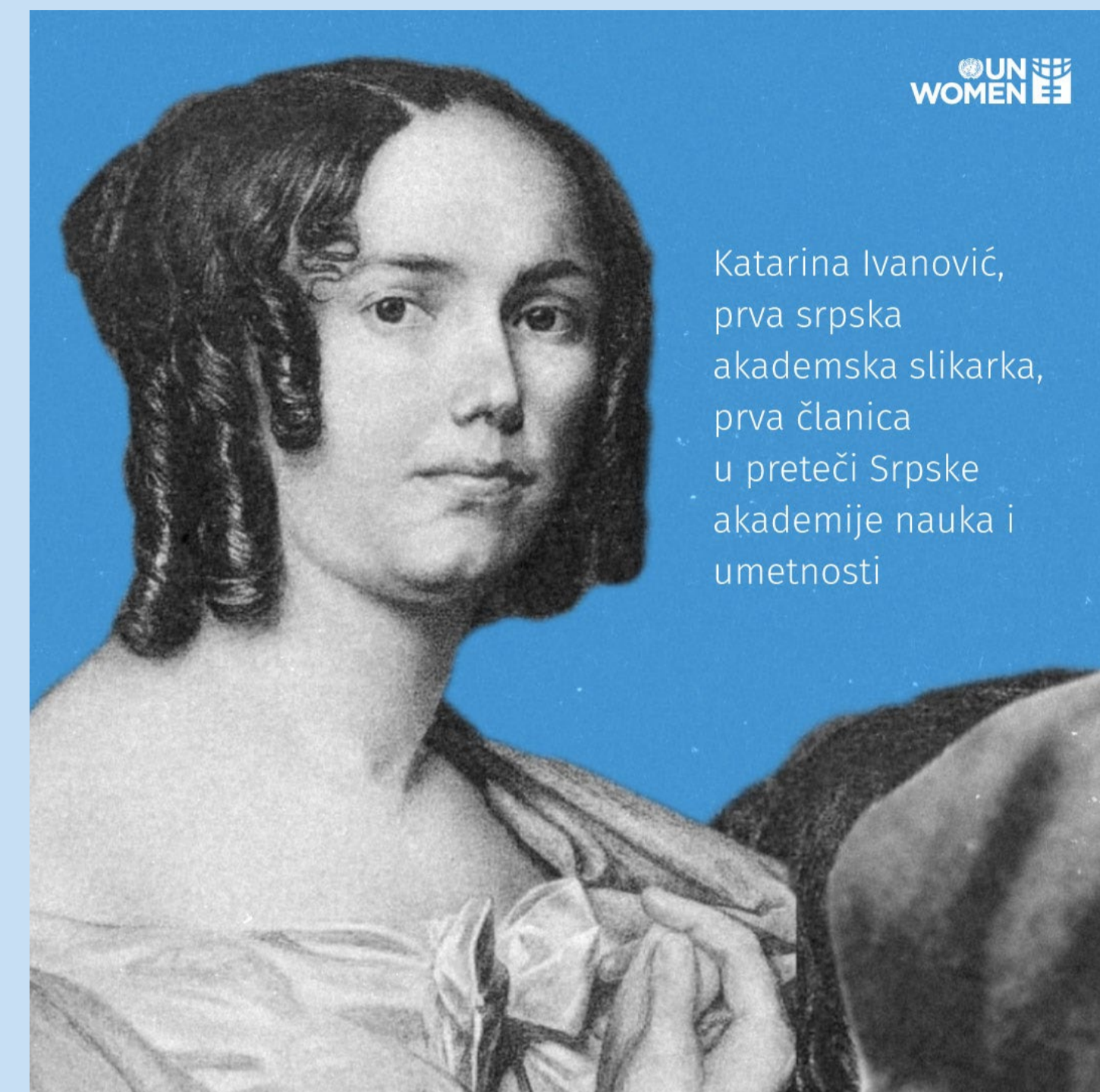
At the “Sustainable Investment Promotion Forum”, organized by the Government of the Republic of Serbia and UNDP at the end of June, a new market intelligence tool, the Serbia SDG Investor Map (“the Map”), was presented. The Map presents the most attractive investment opportunities in the country that are aligned with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Map provides potential investors with impact information and data on the capital that needs to be invested into individual projects in these areas, such as the expected return

profile and the investment timeframe they can expect. The Map contains filtering of areas of interest for SDG 5 – Gender Equality. The Map for Serbia is available at: <https://sdg-investorplatform.undp.org/country/serbia>.

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS IN A DIGITAL WORLD

On the occasion of the International Girls in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Day, UNDP, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and in cooperation with the Petlja Foundation, **organised workshops and lectures** for female pupils and students in high schools and universities. The programme encouraged girls and young women to explore different opportunities of ICT and acquire new digital skills with the aim to continue their education and develop their careers in ICT. Around 20 girls, grammar school students attended the workshop on connections between algorithms and art. Also, 25 young women studying faculties of natural sciences and mathematics, social sciences and humanities and technical and technological sciences, had the opportunity to learn more about the ways in which data are used in decision-making. A **story** captures what girls say about their needs and challenges regarding participation in ICT, while a **social media campaign** presented girls who code and their messages on why it is important for girls to be active in ICT.

To empower primary school girls and boys with vital skills tailored for the dynamic jobs of the future, UNDP is, for the second year, supporting the **Summer school of Programming**



Katarina Ivanović,
prva srpska
akademska slikarka,
prva članica
u preteči Srpske
akademije nauka i
umetnosti



organized by the Petlja Foundation. This free event is taking place through July and August and provides knowledge regarding computer science, but also opens the opportunities for meeting and learning from professionals in the IT industry. Amidst the learning, participants can also enjoy a range of recreational activities, striking a balance between education and fun. In the school's 2023 edition, a noteworthy statistic emerges: of the 100 attendees, 23 are girls. This statistic holds promise as it reflects a positive shift towards gender diversity in the tech arena. For these girls, the event offers a unique chance to connect with peers who share their passion for programming. Surrounded by a supportive community, they can find inspiration and the courage to pursue further education and careers in programming — a promising step towards a brighter future.

During the 65th International Fair of Science and Technical Achievements in Belgrade, UNDP hosted the **panel discussion** “Women in Science – Science for Women”. Panel participants talked about the importance of mutual support of women on the road to success and what needs to be changed to have more women in science. Additionally, a prominent representative of women in science in Serbia, astrophysicist and social media influencer Tijana Prodanović, **presented** how different

technological solutions and innovations contribute to Sustainable Development Goals.

UNDP's Accelerator Lab is conducting a number of research initiatives about women in STEM. Analysis of official and alternative data sources, as well as women's personal stories, helps shed light on various opportunities and challenges women in STEM face. Working with various stakeholders from all sectors and industries – from schoolteachers and state institutions to corporate IT managers – these efforts seek to help women to become winners of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and break through the invisible barriers hindering their full access to the digital world. One initiative involved **analyzing LinkedIn data** to learn more about the representation of women in the Serbian labour market. To illustrate challenges in utilization of artificial intelligence, **AI image generator biases** against women in STEM were explored. A **dedicated website** on women in STEM provides full insight into the Accelerator Lab's findings to better understand the specific situation of women in STEM in Serbia and resolve challenges identified.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE ACTION

In the process of the **development of the Environmental Protection Strategy**, UNDP is supporting the Ministry of Environmental Protection in integrating gender equality into this document. Bearing in mind the different impact of environmental changes on women and men and their various contributions to environmental protection, measures were drafted related to ensuring gender equality through strategy implementation.

Through support to innovative green transition solutions, UNDP continues to promote gender equality and women's participation. Among the awarded solutions in the past period, within the “EU for Green Agenda in Serbia” initiative, is one focusing on sustainability of women social entrepreneurs. In an effort to train women in rural and underdeveloped parts of Serbia on decreasing bio-waste and protecting the environment, a workshop was organized in the Municipality of Medveđa, an area where growing pepper for the production of ajvar is the predominant activity. This is why participant's learnt about **the connection between ajvar (pepper spread) and cosmetics, and how pepper waste could be used to make soap or facial mask**. A supported business solution for expediting Serbia's green transition across its economy and so-

ciety is the one involving **“S.C.S. Plus” factory's initiative to construct a solar powerplant** to utilize solar energy in furniture production. This woman-managed company, established in the village of Podvis, a former mining area near the municipality of Knjaževac, employs 180 people, mainly women. Considering that this municipality is less developed, the factory's presence holds significant importance for the local economy.

The active perennial **Challenge Call for Proposals for Innovative Solutions for the Green Transition of the Serbian Economy** is an opportunity for gaining support in the implementation of innovative solutions in areas of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, including those which contribute to gender equality and empowering of women. Public and private companies, social enterprises, research institutions, civil society organizations, local self-governments and managers of protected areas can apply individually or jointly to the call. The best applications will receive mentoring and technical support to develop their ideas, while the best among them will receive co-funding to implement these solutions in practice. The call for innovative ideas will be open until the end of 2026, and the received applications will be evaluated and selected in several cycles.



ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S NETWORKING AT LOCAL LEVEL

Supported through the Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 - ReL0aD2, financed by the European Union, 30 CSOs completed their activities in 7 cities and municipalities in Serbia. Over 60 of beneficiaries of these projects were women and girls, while four initiatives were entirely dedicated to women's empowerment.

Their areas of intervention were:

- Breast cancer prevention: CSO *Jedna uz drugu* **taught over 180 women in the villages of Čantavir, Hajdukovo, Bajmok and Kelebija to perform breast self-examinations, prepare healthy meals and apply relaxation and recreation techniques, with the aim of preventing or alleviating consequences of breast cancer.**
- Encouraging and developing creativity in young women/girls: CSO *Alternativni centar za devojke* organized the Camp for Super Girls for 13 participants who

achieved remarkable success in science, art, and sports. The goal was to improve the educational and professional advancement of girls through gender-sensitive and creative workshops. As a final product of this project, a **short film "Super girls"** was made explaining why equal opportunities for girls and boys in education is important.

- Enabling women in rural areas who are or want to become entrepreneurs: CSO *Centar za ravnomerni regionalni razvoj – CenTrir* **supported 44 women farmers from rural areas of Topola in starting or improving the sale of their products online.** At the same time, CSO SPA also empowered 200 women from rural areas of Vladičin Han in their aim to start or improve their own businesses through a series of trainings, workshops and professional mentorship.

As part of UNDP's support to local assemblies, the third meeting of the Network of Local Assemblies' Secretaries was held in Nis, with gender equality being among the key topics. Gender equality mechanisms, wom-

en in local politics, and the political inclusion of women in rural and remote areas were among the topics discussed with over 100 participants - secretaries and experts.

Four workshops on gender-related issues were also supported. The first one was conducted in Kragujevac, on local response to violence against women. The topic was discussed with representatives of the local self-government, municipal assembly, social welfare centre and CSOs, with the facilitation of the Foundation BFPE for a Responsible Society. The second one was organized with the Bujanovac Council and Commission for gender equality. The main issue discussed was the possibility of organizing a women's parliamentary network, despite the existing political and ethnic diversities in the municipality. The third **workshop was in Valjevo** on the issue of femicide. The fourth workshop, organized also with BFPE partners, was held in Lučani, on the topic of women in local politics. UNDP's support also includes helping the local authorities develop a comprehensive municipal action plan for gender equality.





YOUTH 4 INCLUSION, EQUALITY AND TRUST

As part of the regional [joint UN project](#), 15 women and men Young Ambassadors of Peace started internships in local civil society organizations in Serbia, to gain more experience in communicating with decision makers and implement local campaigns for more equitable and cohesive communities.

Youth journalists and activists across the region were supported to create and promote constructive and gender sensitive narratives in the media. Their media literacy skills were enhanced through education focusing on critical thinking, reporting on toxic masculinities and online hate speech, mediation, dialogue and violence prevention. With mentors' assistance, participants started work on their on advocacy actions for positive social change.

Representatives of political parties, CSOs and leaders in their communities from around Serbia (28 of them) began a series of seminars to improve their skills in the areas of social cohesion and culture of dialogue. After the workshops, the participants will be mentored on chosen advocacy topics, including Roma education, politics of reconciliation and addressing the past, gender equality, green policies, rights of people with disabilities, and rights of the LGBT community. Knowledge and skills of project participants helped improve insights into the problem of violence against

women, as one participant facilitated discussion on this topic in Valjevo.

In a dynamic consultation, 20 women and 14 men aged 18 to 30 from different backgrounds from Serbia gathered to explore the interplay between gender equality, social cohesion, and sustainable development. During the consultation, participants identified key elements of a thriving society, such as equal rights, opportunities, solidarity, peace, mutual respect, cooperation, inclusion, and freedom from discrimination. This consultation contributed to regional research on perceptions and challenges regarding gender equality and social cohesion. In Serbia, around 160 young individuals participated in the survey, to provide a broader understanding of prevailing perceptions and challenges on gender equality and social cohesion in society. Rigid gender roles and stereotypes perpetuated by media and social platforms emerged as the most prevalent hindrance (20.4%). This was closely followed by negative legacies of the past (19.7%) and traditional gender norms. Research results will be published in the upcoming period.

The Regional Youth Academy on Constructive Narratives was organized gathering 149 young people (118 women and 31 men) from Bosnia and Hercegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro to learn about media and information literacy and to network with their regional peers. Through the academy young people engaged

with regional experts in communication, social work, security studies, information sciences, psychology, philosophy, gender and cultural studies to build critical thinking to oppose divisive narratives, hate speech, gender norms, stereotypes, prejudices and other forms of inequalities. The academy served as a knowledge base for young people to then create media products and public advocacy campaigns, including a module on the [gender dimension of hate speech](#).

EMPOWERMENT THAT LEAVES NO ONE BEHIND

With UNDP's support to strengthening national and local systems for the effective socio-economic integration of returnees in the Western Balkans, returnee-centered models for reintegration have been designed in the municipalities of Valjevo, Novi Sad and Bujanovac. Each model is adjusted to the specific local context and embedded in the local action plans and strategies adopted by partner municipalities. These models imply concrete solutions for removing some of the systemic institutional and administrative bottlenecks to reintegration and are enabling better services for returnees.

Thanks to undertaken efforts:

- 210 Roma and returnees (over half of them women) were trained to gain a set of soft, technical and digital skills to en-

hance their employability, adjusted to their education, and prior experience. In addition to this, [support for start-up businesses](#) will also be provided, including start-up grants and business mentoring.

- Together with local stakeholders, 6 social cohesion initiatives were implemented to fight stigma and empower returnees. These gathered over 400 persons (approx. 40% of them women). Many of the social cohesion initiatives have piloted inclusive economic empowerment models, such as the empowerment of Roma-returnee women through inclusive social cooperatives or businesses. New initiatives will be supported through a [call that was](#) open until end of July 2023.
- To secure that local services better respond to needs of returnees, innovative models of social contracting have been piloted, while new services introduced (home care services) to ensure greater outreach to those in need. Thanks to this action, home care services were established for the first time in Bujanovac, and a Roma women-led organization has been accredited and certified to provide these services. Moreover, the sustainability of such social services is enhanced through leveraging of municipal funding and contracting.



ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

With support of UNICEF, National Coalition to End Child Marriage (NCECM) continued to act as critical platform for bringing together key stakeholders from government bodies, civil society organizations, and child rights advocates to advocate for eliminating the practice. At the 11th public meeting of NCECM held on April 10, Ms. Maja Gojkovic, Deputy PM, President of the Coordinating Body for Gender Equality (CBGE) of the Government, reaffirmed that the Government of Serbia has set gender equality and full realization of human rights of all girls and boys at the very top of its priorities. The current draft of the Family Law removes any legal possibility of child and early marriages (previously allowing the marriage above 16 years with the Courts' decision), therefore acts of influencing, forcing, encouraging or otherwise enabling conditions for establishing an extramarital union with a child are being considered domestic violence. Speaking about legislative changes Ms. Gojkovic pointed out that in the process of public discussion of the Law, it will be proposed to adopt solutions which define child marriage as a form of human trafficking, as well provisions to the Law that sanction third parties who form or facilitate forming of an extramarital union with a minor, and those who influence minors or mediate to establish such an union.

The second thematic meeting of the Na-

tional Coalition, held on 27 June 2023 was dedicated to opportunities for public budget funding of activities aimed against child marriages in Serbia. This meeting served as a unique opportunity to delve deeper into the recommendations of the evaluation of the UNICEF program on the prevention of child marriage (2018-2020). Participants reached a shared understanding of how one can effectively allocate public resources, leverage existing funding mechanisms, and explore new avenues for financing. They agreed to advocate ensuring that the financial commitment matches the urgency and magnitude of the problem at hand, through monitoring of public funding and advocacy for an increase in funding from the public budget (both national and local).

National Coalition to End Child Marriage produced two newsletters that are widely distributed to inform about key activities and achievements in the field of child marriage prevention and response.

Newsletter #4 available at link [here](#) and Newsletter #5 available at link [here](#).

MATERNAL, CHILD HEALTH AND BREASTFEEDING

Capacity building for seven NICUs across country was supported by peer professional exchange with experts from Institute of Neonatology. A set of recommendations for

improving application of family-oriented and developmental care principles in each NICU has been defined, and the main findings/recommendations is to be shared with the national expert body for children's health care and the Ministry of Health. As part of the aforementioned activities, a set of data for monitoring the implementation of breastfeeding practices in the NICU was improved. The recommendation for family-oriented developmental care/parental involvement in newborn care in NICU is developed, while its official endorsement is still pending. The most important parents of a premature and sick child are given the opportunity to participate in the care of the child while in the NICU on a wider scale. These activities were accompanied by fruitful cooperation with parents' associations which resulted in preparation the content on brochures for parents during the treatment of newborn in NICU.

The support to the country in the area of breastfeeding promotion and protection continued. The analyses of the key indicators for first three months in 2023, collected through the well-established national system for monitoring breastfeeding practices indicated significant gaps in practicing evidence-based practices: skin-to-skin in 1st hour (55,5%); the presence of mother with child 24 hours a day (65,6%); BF in the 1st hour after birth (41,9%); exclusive BF of infants younger than 6 months (26,6%). IPHS developed set of instructions and procedures to support the

capacity of expert teams dealing with collection, analysis and reporting of data on the implementation of breastfeeding practices within the health system.

Breastfeeding promotion activities for the general population are implementing in cooperation with the Telegraf portal, which has so far published several texts (6) focused on importance of breastfeeding, practical advices for mothers/parents, which are formulated in the cooperation with professionals.

Two national experts, members of MoH's Working Group for developing new bylaw on Food for Children (including BMS marketing) were supported by UNICEF to participate in Global Congress on Implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. The recommendations and technical support of experts after the Congress are available to Ministry of Health in order to intensify measures for control the marketing of BMS.

To support breastfeeding promotion and care for maternal and child health partnership has been established with the second most red online news portal in the country – Telegraf.rs and the Comtrade Group (the company is engaged in developing a series of podcasts, thematic articles, feedback sessions, educational videos, as well as following PLP events, is participating actively in both national and local advocacy events).



GENDER-RESPONSIVE PARENTING PROGRAMME

Data from baseline findings of the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices on Parental Practices Study in Serbia, conducted by Institute of Psychology, supported by UNICEF, shows that caregivers feel that they still live in an environment in which traditional understanding of gender roles in Serbia is persistent, according to which: fathers are less included in daily care for children, more in ensuring family earnings, mothers have a more regulatory role in child rearing (especially when it comes to the care for the sick child) and housekeeping. When it comes to play, fathers are included dominantly in physical activities with children. On the other side, while mothers and fathers have a positive attitude versus gender-equal distribution of roles especially in early years, traditional understanding of gender roles is interfering with their readiness/capability for personal behavior change.

Therefore, in partnership with the Association of Home Visiting Nurses of Serbia, in May 2023, the Caring for the Caregivers capacity-building program has been initiated with 20 home-visiting nurses from 20 locations across Serbia who completed the training and are now engaged in supportive supervision

session as well as in preparation for training of additional 80 nurses and sensitization of 100 nurses by the end of 2023. This program component is expected to increase HVN skills for delivering evidence-based, gender and culturally sensitive mental health psychosocial services (MHPSS) to pregnant women and parents/caregivers of young children by mastering a set of counseling skills on improving parental emotional well-being, resilience and self-efficacy.

Technical guidance for home visits to families with pregnant women and small children has been developed by the Special Working Group of the Ministry of Health for the Home Visiting Nurses and the Belgrade Institute of Public Health. The guidance included in the description of the home visits at various ages interventions fostering gender responsive nurturing parental practices, child development and family resilience. In partnership with the [National Chamber of Nurses](#), the guidance has been promoted in several occasions. A hard copy of Guidance has been disseminated across all primary health (PHC) centers in Serbia.

To mark this year's Parenting Month, A Human-Interest Story along with 2 locally produced videos [Empowering Families: The Transformative Impact of Visiting Nurses](#) focusing on fostering caregivers' self efficacy,

and telling the story of critical importance of support for single mothers featured on National, HQ & RO channels (Mp4 Files available [here](#))

NEW STRATEGIES/REPORTS RELEVANT TO GENDER EQUALITY

UNICEF supported development of the Second National Report on Inclusive Education 2019-2021, which provided insight in all key improvements and challenges in the inclusive education implementation, coordination, and monitoring. One of the main findings and recommendations of the Report refers to measures for the increase of *coverage of girls from vulnerable groups with mainstream education, as well as for their enhanced social and education inclusion and prevention of drop-out*. The Report's findings and recommendations were presented on the Public Hearing organized by the National Parliament Committee for Education, Science, Technological Development, and Information Society, ensuring national consensus on the ways forward in development of inclusive education nurturing gender equality. Recommendations of the Report will be integrated in the Education Strategy Action Plan 2023-2026 which is under development

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION LEGAL FRAMEWORK

UNICEF supported development of the analysis of the compliance of Serbian national inclusive education legislative framework with the international standards, which provided significant recommendations for further development of gender sensitive and gender responsible education legislative. Recommendations include legal amendments necessary to address gender stereotypes, support to education of girls from vulnerable groups, prevention of gender related dropout, introducing gender sensitive language, promoting gender equality and prevention of gender-based discrimination and violence. The recommendations are integrated in the National Report on Inclusive Education 2019-2021 which reached national consensus on further steps. The intersectoral Working Group for the further alignment of the legal framework with the international standards, including the gender equality standards set by the CEDAW and Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee on Serbian report, is established by the Ministry of Education.



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MONITORING FRAMEWORK – IE MONITORING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The revision of the first comprehensive IE Monitoring Framework, developed in 2014, has been conducted, aiming to develop monitoring indicators, descriptors, and mechanisms for inclusive education monitoring at the local level. Indicators targeting the position of girls, and implementation of the principles of gender equality, are among the revised IE Monitoring Framework. The high-level consultations and the endorsement of the revised IE Monitoring Framework are expected this year, afterwards the Framework will be implemented at the local level, in 20 municipalities, to inform the new local inclusive policies.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN EMERGENCIES (GBVIE)

UNICEF supported direct GBV prevention and response services for refugee and migrant women, girls and boys in three asylum and reception centres, one safe hub in Belgrade city center, and for Ukrainians in private accommodation. In collaboration with two implementing partners Info Park and Danish Refugee Council UNICEF reached 401 women, girls and boys including 68 unaccompanied and separated boys (UASBs) with services including outreach, prevention and psycho-

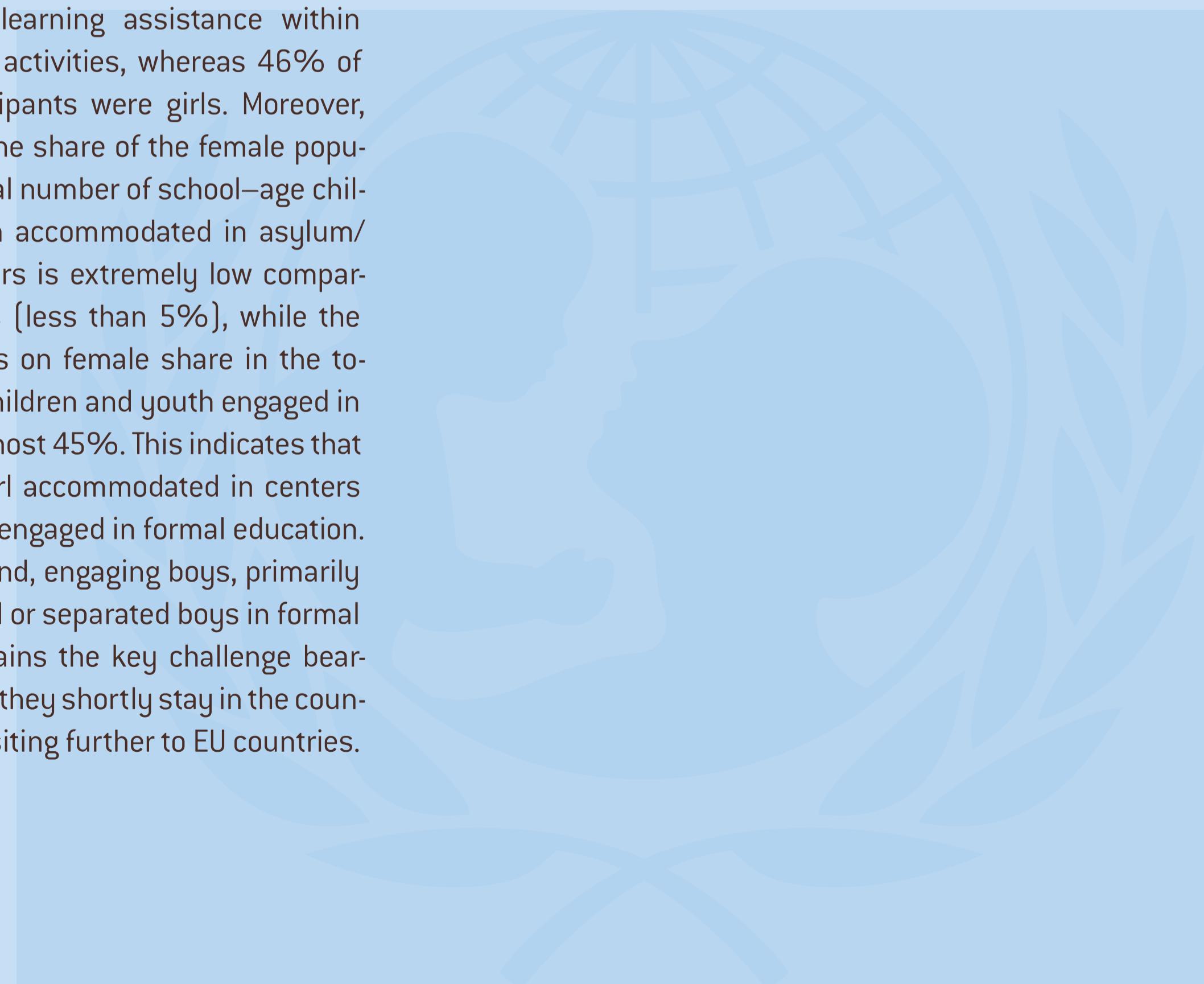
social support focusing on women and girls who are survivors or at risk of GBV (through workshops and info-sessions, and individually via hotline), as well as safe referral and support to case management in GBV cases. UNICEF has continued to distribute dignity/hygiene kits for purposes of mitigating GBV risks reaching 398 beneficiaries including 140 UASBs in this period. The kits included key hygiene and other vital items for women, girls and boys accommodated in reception/asylum centers, social protection institutions and NGO shelters. GBV info materials have been distributed to beneficiaries accommodated in all locations, reaching over 365 women, girls, and boys.

SUPPORT TO THE EDUCATION OF REFUGEE AND MIGRANT GIRLS IN SERBIA

UNICEF supports the development of psychoeducational workshops for children and youth from refugee populations that serve as a vital platform for imparting knowledge on mental health, tackling the issue of stigma, and fostering an environment conducive to open dialogue regarding the mental health challenges faced by young boys and girls. The content and themes of this programme is tailored to accommodate the varying needs and interests of the participants, bearing in mind their backgrounds. The programme started in late July and is currently ongoing.

As of July 2023, specialized MHPSS support, was provided through individual and group counseling online and in person. Beneficiaries were reached through promotive materials handed out to partner organizations, and by referral of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, and partner organizations; with the aim to alleviate the burdensome impact of stress and trauma experienced by the refugee boys and girls and adolescents, and boost their learning skills in new circumstances.

During 2023, through support provided by UNICEF aiming to strengthen system to provide more inclusive and quality education to refugee/migrant children, 100 children were provided with learning assistance within Learning Clubs activities, whereas 46% of the total participants were girls. Moreover, SCRM data on the share of the female population in the total number of school-age children and youth accommodated in asylum/reception centers is extremely low comparing to the boys (less than 5%), while the monthly reports on female share in the total number of children and youth engaged in education is almost 45%. This indicates that nearly every girl accommodated in centers is successfully engaged in formal education. On the other hand, engaging boys, primarily unaccompanied or separated boys in formal education, remains the key challenge bearing in mind that they shortly stay in the country swiftly transiting further to EU countries.





FIGURES AND STATISTICS

Among the 17,055 newly arrived persons observed between February and July 2023, 90.5% were men, 6.5% were children, including 405 UASCs, and only 3% were women. As per Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) data, at end-July 2023, 3,054 refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants were accommodated in 14 governmental asylum/reception/transit centers, of which 2,815 men (92.2%), 82 women (2.7%) and 157 children (5.1%). Meanwhile 55% of all the children recorded in the centers were UASC (86). 2 women were granted refugee status during the reporting period. UNHCR and partners provide legal assistance and an individualized integration support to recognized refugees. A total of 9,314 individuals benefited from counselling (including counselling on asylum) by UNHCR and its partners during the reporting period.

UKRAINIAN RESPONSE

Since the escalation of conflict in Ukraine, the Serbian Ministry of Interior (MOI) has noted a total of 236,191 persons who fled the country and entered Serbia. At end-July, 59 (11 men, 33 women, 8 boys, and 7 girls) refugees from Ukraine were accommodated in Vranje Asylum Center, run by SCRM. On 17 March, the Government of Serbia extended the Decision on providing Temporary Protection in Serbia to all persons fleeing Ukraine until 18 March 2024. Between February and July 2023, a total of 158 Ukrainians (44 men, 90 women, 14 boys and 10 girls) requested temporary

protection (TP), 156 were granted the TP, and 735 TP were extended during the period considered. To promote and inform about available services for refugees from Ukraine, UNHCR partner Crisis Response and Policy Center (CRPC) visited the refugee trustees of the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) in nine refugee-hosting municipalities in Serbia - Loznica, Šabac, Mladenovac, Smederevo, Paraćin, Kragujevac, Gornji Milanovac, Vrnjačka Banja and Kraljevo. On 29 June, UNHCR and Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) delivered a seminar at the Faculty of Political Science of Belgrade University entitled *“Protection of Ukrainian Refugees from the perspective of international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law”*. The seminar served the purpose of broadening the students’ knowledge of refugee protection, especially in the context of the Ukraine emergency.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and persons at risk of statelessness in community activities promotes inclusion and peaceful coexistence. UNHCR focuses on promoting their human capital, and on linking them with the local authorities, schools, youth, cultural centers and municipalities, and on supporting joint projects.

- The School for Hospitality and Tourism in Belgrade, CRPC and UNHCR organized two *Delicacy Monday* events, hosted by KC Grad in Belgrade. In February, more than 100 visitors enjoyed dishes and desserts from Iran and Serbia, prepared by

the school’s students and the refugees. At the event in May, over 160 visitors enjoyed delicacies prepared by refugees from Ukraine and the school’s students.

- On 3 February, seven refugee women from Ukraine visited an exhibition in Vranje *“Two Faces, One Life”*, occasioned by the World Cancer Day and organized by the Society of Oncology Patients of the City of Vranje. The exhibition had the main goal of promoting preventive health examinations, and the women refugees also made new friendships with the local women present at the exhibition opening.
- On 17 March, at the initiative and with support from UNHCR partner Sigma Plus, a performance (concert) *“What do women want”*, by the Ukrainian refugees, was staged in Vranje AC. Apart from other refugees from Vranje Asylum Center, the audience included members of the local Society of Oncological Patients and a Russian language teacher from the local high school.
- On 1 April, eight Ukrainian refugee women participated at the charity bazaar in Vranje *“Laughter as Medicine”* (Smeh kao lek). By selling the handicrafts (bags, purses, hats, ornamental items) made on Sigma Plus creative workshops in AC Vranje, the money was raised for the medical treatment of three local women.
- 36th Belgrade Marathon: on 23 April, UNHCR Serbia mobilized a **#WithRefugees Team** of 35 participants, including refugees from Burundi, UNHCR and UN staff, the UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia Ms. Francoise Jacob, the Ambassador of Belgium to Serbia H.E. Ms Cathy Buggenhout,





etc. Refugee women from Burundi, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Niger, Ghana, and Russia joined the events surrounding the Marathon by performing on a UNHCR stage and by volunteering to distribute water to the runners.

- In May, two Ukrainian refugee women opened their own business - a sewing shop - in Vranje, with support from UNHCR, Sigma plus and the local authorities.

WOMEN LEADERSHIP AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT IN REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

In order to reduce risk of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), to promote resilience and to aid recovery of communities, UNHCR and its partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) implemented a range of activities primarily focused on women and girls. These activities encompassed: identification of GBV survivors, empowerment activities, health raising awareness and protection monitoring.

A total number of 21 GBV survivors, with 10 being newly identified cases, were provided assistance, and referred to specialized services. Legal assistance, including in-court representation, have been provided to the GBV survivors. During the reporting period, DRC, supported by UNHCR, held a total of 47 activities for refugee and asylum-seeking women accommodated in Krnjača Asylum Center, hosted mostly in the Women Safe Space within the asylum center. The core objective of these initiatives was to advance women's rights, encompassing the right to seek asylum, preventive measures against

GBV, health-oriented awareness programs, and a spectrum of other subjects. Furthermore, the DRC also facilitated a PSEA (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) workshop tailored for female asylum-seekers and refugees.

Through gender-sensitive approach and comprehensive rehabilitation services, UNHCR partner International Aid Network (IAN), provided assistance to 20 GBV survivors (among them 14 female and 6 LGBTI+ survivors). UNHCR partner Center for Research and Social Development (IDEAS) has further developed the work of the *Council for Refugees and Asylum-Seekers (CRAS)*. Thematic Group for Empowerment and Education (TGEF) has been established, aiming at dealing with the empowerment of GBV survivors and this entity within CRAS will be coordinated by a female refugee, survivor of SGBV who is granted refugee status in Serbia.

CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGES (CEFM)

During the reporting period, UNHCR partner Praxis organized 4 CEFM awareness-raising workshops with children in senior grades in primary schools in Novi Sad, Vranje, Niš and Pančevo. A total of 77 children (42 boys and 35 girls) took part in the workshops through discussions about child rights, education, early school drop-out, needs and obligations at that age, as well as parental roles and obligations in marriage.

Schools from Novi Sad and Pančevo accepted the last year's proposal and included this topic into their annual school program. In

February, Praxis published the report *"2022 Annual Report on Child Marriages in Serbia"*, presenting their activities in prevention of CEFM and raising awareness activities in general population and reported cases of child marriages.

On 10 April, A11 organized a training for Roma volunteers and activists. Twenty-one participants took part, focusing on Roma tradition, early marriages, access to personal documents, health protection, social protection, and adequate housing. A Roma girl successfully finished the second grade of the Economic and Trade Secondary School in Novi Pazar, becoming the first Roma girl in secondary education in Novi Pazar. She also participated in the workshop on the prevention of child marriages, held for the children and parents in "Rastko Nemanjić" Primary School in Novi Pazar, in cooperation with the local Health Center and Social Welfare Center. This workshop was also dedicated to the prevention of child marriages and encouraging the Roma children to continue education on the secondary level.

In "Ljupče Španac" Primary School in Bela Palanka, a workshop on the prevention of child marriages and protection of reproductive health was organized for the female pupils in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.

In April 2023, the A 11 submitted a written contribution for the European Commission 2023 Annual Report on Serbia, covering various issues of significance for women and children, such as denial of parental and child allowance to Roma, insufficient implementation of the impact assessment duty from the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, the situation of health mediators, lack of account-





ability for discriminatory statements against Roma, social card system. On 12 and 13 July, the A 11 Initiative organized a training session for members of the Roma Women's Network of the Republic of Serbia, with the aim of enhancing the position of Roma through improved access to economic and social rights, also covering the topics of gender equality and worker's rights, access to personal documents, health, and social protection, as well as securing adequate housing.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

Partner CRPC provided input to the Serbia Chapter of the [ILGA Europe's Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe and Central Asia 2023](#). On 22 February, together with BCHR and UNHCR, organized a SOGI panel "*Refugees into the Community*" in the Pride Info Center in Belgrade, where LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum-seekers and local activists discussed the challenges they face in their inclusion, integration and everyday life.

Under the established [Rainbow Migration Network](#) (RMN), initiated by the BCHR, two trainings were organized- in March and April - concerning the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons

from Serbia and refugee community. The first training was dedicated to NGOs (RMN members) who deal with refugees and migrants in Serbia, whose members were further introduced with LGBTIQ+ rights in general and their position in Serbia. The second training was held for LGBTIQ+ oriented NGOs, whose representatives were introduced with the asylum and refugee law, with specific focus on the rights of vulnerable groups, such as LGBTIQ+ and GBV asylum-seekers and refugees.

On 1 April, CRPC and BCHR (through Rainbow Migration Network) held a *session "Communication with Communities"* with asylum-seekers and refugees on LGBTIQ+ safety, social and art life in Belgrade. As a result of partnership between UNHCR and the Impact Hub Belgrade, member of #ForRefugees network, five LGBTIQ+ refugees undertook a five-day training in entrepreneurial skills in July. BCHR legal officers represented 11 persons in the asylum procedure, whose cases include the elements of gender related persecution - out of which 7 were members of LGBTIQ+ community.

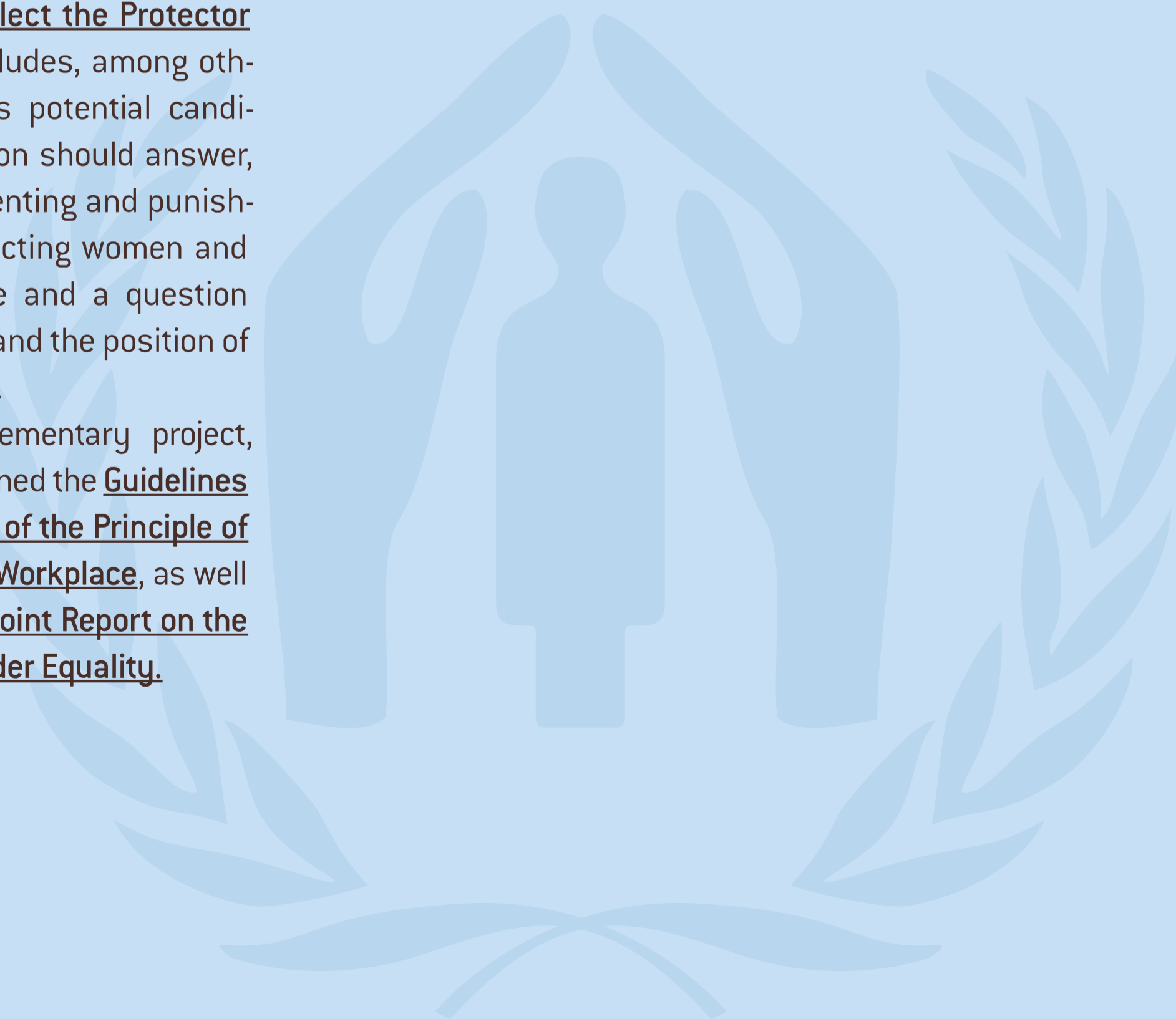
EDUCATION

Support to educational inclusion remains one of the focus areas of UNHCR in Serbia. Through DAFI – Albert Einstein German Aca-

demie Refugee Initiative, UNHCR has continued to support four refugee students, among them two young woman, who are enrolled in tertiary education in Serbia. This July, another young man from Guinea became the fifth refugee student who enrolled into a tertiary education institution in Serbia - School of Applied Health Sciences.

VARIOUS

- The Government of Serbia adopted the "Migration Profile" for 2022, published by the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM).
- The A11 Initiative has prepared a document titled "[How We Elect the Protector of Citizens](#)", which includes, among other proposed questions potential candidates for Ombudsperson should answer, a question about preventing and punishing femicide and protecting women and children from violence and a question about gender equality and the position of the LGBTIQ+ community.
- Within another complementary project, the A11 Initiative published the [Guidelines for the Implementation of the Principle of Gender Equality in the Workplace](#), as well as the [Analysis of the Joint Report on the Implementation of Gender Equality](#).



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS TEAM

On the occasion of International Women's Day, observed on March 8th, OHCHR Serbia, in collaboration with the Resident Coordinator and the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, undertook a visit to Slavica Ivanovic's agricultural household in Mionica, as well as the "Women of the Kolubara District" association, that in previous years achieved significant results in the field of gender equality. During this visit, the spotlight was on 15 accomplished female farmers from the Kolubara district, who introduced their campaign titled "What is my share?" This initiative is designed to bring attention to instances where women willingly forfeit their inheritance in favor of their male family members. The event was accompanied by the presence of a female Member of Parliament and high representatives of the Mionica local self-government. The Resident Coordinator used the occasion to advocate for the upholding of women's rights, the promotion of gender equality, and the empowerment of women in all aspects of life, as part of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. More info: <https://serbia.un.org/en/228064-international-womens-day-2023-women-kolubara-district-continue-their-successful-fight>

In addition, OHCHR Serbia supported Fem-Platz in creating and presenting the Third Report on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the Republic of Serbia. Encompassing the period of 2021-2022, the report shines a light

on the challenges faced by women in Serbia, including an escalating wave of misogyny, distressing incidents of violence resulting in femicide, and an enduring wage disparity where women continue to earn less than their male counterparts. On a positive note, Serbia achieved a notable ranking of 23rd out of 146 countries, marking its highest accomplishment in the sphere of political representation and the involvement of women in governmental bodies and the Parliament in 2022. Furthermore, the report underlines that significant strides were made in 2021 and 2022 with the adoption and amendment of pivotal laws and policies designed to enhance the human rights of women in Serbia. However, there remains a documented deficiency in the effective implementation of these measures. The presentation of the report on May 30th was a collaborative effort supported by both OHCHR Serbia and UN Women in Serbia. It garnered substantial interest from a diverse array of stakeholders, including experts, media representatives, government officials, international organizations, development partners, women's advocacy groups, and activists. This widespread attention underscores the significance of the report and its findings in the ongoing pursuit of gender equality and women's rights in Serbia. More info: <https://serbia.un.org/en/238178-report-women%E2%80%99s-rights-and-gender-equality-serbia-2021-2022>



Dr Draga Ljočić,
prva srpska
lekarka,
zalagala se za
rodnu
ravnopravnost,
kao i za sticanje
prava glasa za
žene



EU PRO PLUS – THE EUROPEAN UNION LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Programme's support to the business sector is strongly contributing to strengthening of women entrepreneurship and employment of women. As a result of grant support to entrepreneurs, micro and small enterprises (MSEs), the incentives for the MSE applicants who employ women in the evaluation criteria have resulted in 63 of the recorded 119 new jobs being occupied by women, while 30 of 114 supported MSEs are women owned. Furthermore, through 16 projects implemented by business support organisations, a total of 498 enterprises were supported, where 26 are women owned. The support included procurement of new equipment, introduction of standards, mentoring and training in the field of digitalisation, sources of financing, greening of SMEs and circular economy. Finally, the Public Call for Proposals for Supporting Women and Youth Startups is published in July 2023. It envisages strong contribution to the GE and youth by supporting women and youth entrepreneurship in 43 extremely underdeveloped municipalities through procurement of equipment and introduction of services.

Within the efforts to improve social infrastructure and social cohesion, the EU PRO Plus is facilitating access to different public services for marginalised and vulnerable groups. Total of 37 local infrastructure proj-

ects are contributing to the improved functioning of educational, cultural, sports, health and social protection institutions, etc, where all projects foresee soft measures designed to create better conditions for participation of disadvantaged citizens. For example, the project in Mionica aimed at improving sports infrastructure, promoted equal treatment in sports which resulted in establishment of the first women football club in this municipality. Through 20 projects for strengthening social services, it has facilitated employment of 39 women as social protection and health care service providers until now. Additionally, 17 different social services have been improved so far and provided to over 500 marginalised people, including people with disabilities, elderly, victims of domestic violence, children with behavioural problems, out of which 60% are female.

The Programme activities aiming to develop national and local capacities for defining and implementing Integrated Sustainable Territorial Development (ISTD) model have continued with respect to equal opportunities and women representation in the capacity development activities, such as study visits, trainings and workshops. Until now, a total of 1416 individuals at local and regional level, including representatives of local self-governments (LSGs), regional development agencies (RDAs) and the Ministry of European Integration (MEI), benefited from this intervention, out of which 735 (52%) were female.



„Najveći problem sa kojim se žene suočavaju
jesu **predrasude u svim segmentima života**“,

Neda.

#IWD #8mart



EU SHAI – CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVED LIVING CONDITIONS FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS

Through the implementation of 19 grants in LGs for integrated support to multiple vulnerable target groups of Roma, persons with disabilities (PWDs), women victims of domestic violence and youth leaving the social care system, the EU SHAI Programme contributed to improved living conditions for the most vulnerable women and men, girls and boys in a sustainable and accountable manner.

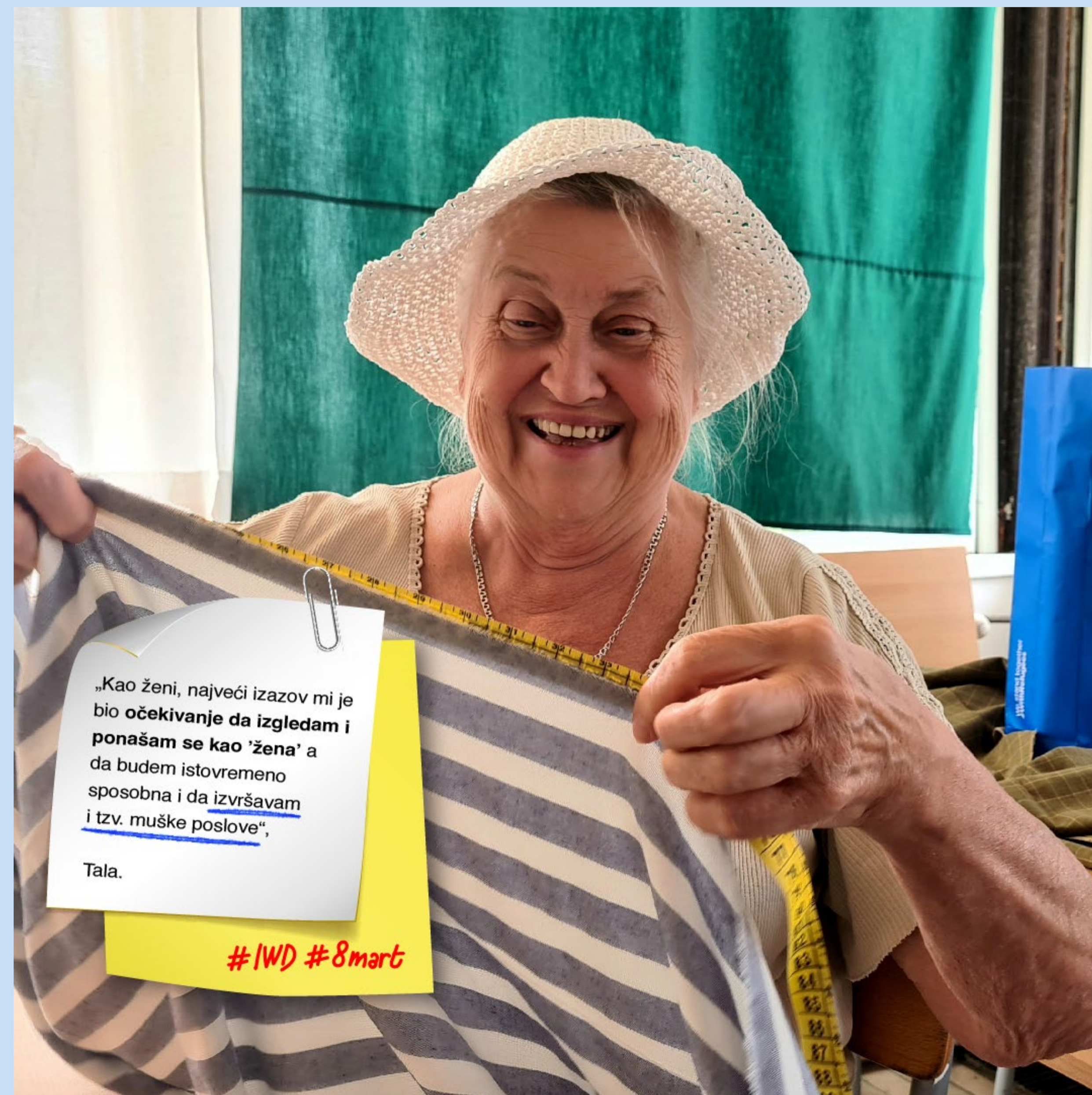
Through 19 active projects, housing solutions and complementary social inclusion measures have been provided to 381 vulnerable families with more than 1400 family members (54% Roma people, 24% persons with disability, 12% women victims of domestic violence, 6% youth, 4% local social vulnerable population)

This has been achieved through the construction of multi-family buildings, provision of individual houses/apartments and reconstruction of private houses complemented with active social inclusion measures. Hundred and nine (109) families with 316 family members (148 male and 168 female) moved to the new constructed social housing buildings in Čačak, Loznica, Svilajnac, Vrnjačka Banja, Ljubovija and Šabac,

while additional 18 families will be accommodated in the constructed social housing flats in Raška by the end of August 2023. All women are legally registered owners of the housing support solutions, together with their spouses and partners.

Gender mainstreaming is an integrated part of the projects and up to this period, 305 families have been selected with 1029 family members, out of which 544 are female and 485 are male. Temporary work engagement is provided in five LSGs for 45 beneficiaries (12 male and 33 female). 249 beneficiaries (89 male and 160 female) are engaged in vocational adult education in 11 LSGs

Thirty two women victims of domestic violence with their families are supported with social housing apartments and individual houses in ownership so far. Women are also supported through integrated active inclusion measures in access to services, employment and income generating support, support to formal and informal education and rising employability and tailored measures for overcoming challenges and obstacles in inclusion of the target group and individual. Specifically for PWDs the challenges have been overcome in Kula through capacity building and employment of six women with disabilities through establishment of a social enterprise for paperware production.





Between February and July 2023, the project “Gender Equality for Cultural Diversity” implemented by the Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia (Nezavisna kulturna scena Srbije, NKSS) and funded by the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD) has advanced significantly.

In July 2023, the report *ROD I RAD U KULTURNOM POLJU U SRBIJI* on the mechanisms that generate gender inequalities in Serbia’s cultural and creative industries (CCI) was completed in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts in Niš. This report identifies the cause of gender inequality in CCI and provide recommendations to improve women’s participation in these industries. For example, the study conducted by the organization revealed that women in CCI work in precarious working conditions. Many women have multiple jobs (20.4%) and are paid less than their male counterparts for the same job (25%). However, measures to support these women are lacking. Recommendations to strengthen the working conditions of women are included in the report. The findings of the study has been presented in five cities of Serbia – Kragujevac, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Niš, and Pančevo – through meetings with the stakeholders and authorities of these cit-

ies. In addition, media and digital campaigns were conducted to increase the visibility of the results - videos available on YouTube: Sa čime se susreću radnice u kulturi u Srbiji? and Podaci o rodnoj neravnopravnosti u kulturi i kreativnim industrijama. The report will be distributed in the print format and it is planned to be translated into English.

Furthermore, in May 2023, NKSS formed a network of women’s organizations, Network for gender equality in arts and culture, to serve as a platform for mutual collaboration, support, and knowledge sharing. Currently, 34 members composed of cultural workers, artistic collectives, and an NGO dealing with human rights are part of it. This network is open to all those who aim to advance the status of women in Serbia. The next call for members will open in March 2024.

The IFCD is a key instrument of international cooperation and assistance for the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). Through offering funding to cultural and creative projects in developing countries, it aims to empower both civil society actors and public sectors to drive robust and sustainable creative economic growth.



HVALA VAM

što ste razbile rodne stereotipe i promenile svet.



NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DAYS

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY - 8 MARCH

UN Women in Serbia marked this year's International Women's Day by three events:

- Together with the EU Delegation to Serbia and the Coordination Body for Gender Equality (CBGE) of the Government of Serbia a visit of the high Serbian government officials to Municipality of Priboj was organized on 1 March, to present the municipality's activities and results in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as promote cooperation and support to women's civil society organizations at a local level.
- UN Women joined forces with the CBGE, The Ministry of EU Integration and EU Delegation to Serbia for an Annual conference of local mechanisms for gender equality organized at The Palace of Serbia on 2 March. The aim of the conference was improvement of the work of local mechanisms for gender equality in achieving equal opportunities for women and men at the local level and promotion of cooperation of local mechanisms for gender equality with local civil society organizations.
- Women's Movie Marathon entitled "They

create" was organized on 8 March in Yugoslav Cinematheque in Belgrade and on 9 March in EU info center in Belgrade, by UN Women Serbia, EU Delegation to Serbia, the Commissioner for the protection of equality, the Beldocs Festival, the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of Serbia, embassies of EU member states, artists and directors, to emphasize artistic expression and the creativity of women in the domain of arts and film.

In addition, Gender Theme Group and UN Communications Group, spearheaded by UNDP organized a joint social media campaign on International Women's Day reaching 45K followers. The campaign included an overview of key milestones for GEWE in Serbia and a series of posts with photos and testimonies of women from different backgrounds (older women, women with disabilities, Roma women, refugees, LGBTIQ, rural women) on what gender equality means to them and what their lives would look like if there was more parity between women and men.

On the occasion of the **International Women's Day**, The Coordination Body for Gender Equality and UNFPA emphasized that older women's mental health is as important as physical health. At the conference in Kragu-

jevac participants drew attention to the importance of preserving the mental health of older women, shared experiences from practice on the mental health of older women, as well as examples of good practices and initiatives implemented in the City of Kragujevac. In addition, participants had the opportunity to participate in discussions, share experiences and ideas, and learn more about available resources and support programs.

Additionally, celebrations of the IWD, organized with the support of UNHCR, took place:

In Obrenovac Technical School, where artwork from the Art Unites workshops was presented at a humanitarian selling exhibition by local and refugee youths;

In Šid where partner HCIT distributed giftbags to women and girls accommodated in Šid Reception Center;

In Belgrade where IAN organized a sales exhibition of refugee artwork in the café the proceeds of which benefitted the survivors of the earthquake in Syria;

with UNHCR's support, Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO) organized "My four seasons in my host country" event in Stara Kapetanija Gallery in Zemun, where refugee women from RTC Šid presented their handiworks – 9 women from RTC Šid and 12 women from AC Krnjača attended the event;

DRC organized an engaging debate titled "Who Are Our New Neighbors?" uniting asylum-seekers, refugees, and experts from the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory;

In Preševo where the UNHCR and the local Youth Office organized a workshop on women's rights;

In Vranje where local members of the Society of Oncological Patients and refugee women from Ukraine conducted a workshop called *Happy and Beautiful* which aimed at reducing stress and boosting self-confidence through the mutual support of women;

In Bujanovac where the UNHCR and the local Roma Women's Association shared their experiences with refugee women from Bujanovac Reception Center (RC) and two refugee women joined the women from social enterprise Radanska Ruža in Lebane which served as an opportunity for exchanging information about culture, food, and women's rights, and served to send out a joint message that "Every woman is strong enough on her own to fight for whatever she needs, and when she teams up with other women who have the same goal, the sky is the limit.";

In Bosilegrad where the refugees from the local reception center distributed paper flowers made in UNHCR-supported workshops to women of Bosilegrad town.

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DAYS

INTERNATIONAL FAMILY DAY – 15 MAY

New data reveals population anxieties are widespread and governments are increasingly adopting policies aimed at raising, lowering or maintaining fertility rates. But efforts to influence fertility rates are very often ineffective and can erode women's rights, according to UNFPA's State of World Population report "8 Billion Lives, Infinite Possibilities: the case for rights and choices" released on 19 April. In her op ed published on Politika's front page, UNFPA Regional Director Florence Bauer reminded that **Population anxieties must not lead to denial of women's rights and bodily autonomy**

Families can be places of love and solidarity and are important for each member's sense of identity and belonging. At the same time, families can also be places of conflict and even violence, fed by discrimination and inequalities. On the occasion of the International Family Day, UNFPA featured a web story and series of social media posts that looked into **6 essential ingredients for stronger families**

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR WOMEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE - 18 MAY

This year's Day of Remembrance for Women Victims of Violence was marked by Multi-sectoral meeting on gender-based violence against women and girls, and domestic violence held in The Palace of Serbia on 18 May. The meeting was organized by UN Women Serbia, EU Delegation to Serbia and the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of Serbia. A number of high state officials and representatives of embassies and international organizations gathered at the meeting to discuss what needs to be done to ensure a future without gender-based violence.

Besides this, UNDP, in partnership with the University of Novi Sad Rectory presented the **exhibition „An image for change“**. This collection of photographs and illustrations is part of the free visual **database for ethical media reporting** on violence against women, developed with UNDP's support to improve media's role in preventing violence.

WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY - 1 JUNE

As part of the celebration of the World Children's Day, the Municipality of Preševo, on 1 June 2023, in cooperation with the Youth Office, organized an open event and UNHCR partner Indigo joined with an exhibition of artworks by girls and boys from the local and refugee communities who had painted together on the themes "How I see you", "Equality in my eyes" and "Freedom".

WORLD REFUGEE DAY – 20 JUNE

The marking of the 2023 WRD in Serbia began on 15 June and lasted till 23 June, with a series of events organized by UNHCR and its partners. The central event took place in Belgrade - an exhibition of artwork of refugee students and their peers from the Faculty of Applied Arts – enjoyed by government counterparts, the diplomatic corps, the United Nations Country Team, the (I) NGOs, the academia, the private companies partnering in the UNHCR initiative "Refugee Network" and the refugees themselves. This event was jointly organized by the UNHCR and the SCRM. The Belgrade Waterfront Tow-

er displayed a tailor-made video carrying the refugee visuals and the message Hope Away from Home and the central Belgrade Slavija Square fountain was lit up in UNHCR-blue. WRD events took place in Užice, Bujanovac, Preševo, Vranje, Sombor, Novi Sad and Belgrade, in the presence of refugees and their peers, local authorities and communities who demonstrated their support to refugee integration.

WORLD POPULATION DAY – 11 JULY

UNFPA with partners marked World Population Day on 10 July in Sremski Karlovci, Eco Center Radulovacki. World Population Day marking holds great significance as it addresses the momentous milestone reached last year, when the global population surpassed 8 billion in November 2022. The primary objective of this event was to convey a joint message on the significance of youth well-being and youth participation in the development of their communities, as well as to emphasize the importance of multisectoral cooperation in achieving the full potential of every young person in Serbia. More info **here**.