



WOMEN AND MEN IN SERBIA: AT A GLANCE

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN SERBIA

The dynamic of work in the second half of 2020 was dominated by continued COVID-19 pandemic and the election cycle, both of which somewhat slowed its pace. However, with the formulation of the new government in late October, which now includes a new Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue - a key new partner on the government's side, work on gender equality has noticeably picked up. Ms. Brankica Janković has also been re-appointed as the Commissioner for Equality in November.

Already by 21 December, the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs, together with the Coordination Body for Gender Equality in Republic of Serbia, established a Working Group for the development of a five-year *Draft National Strategy for Prevention and Combating Gender-based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* and its subsequent two-year Action Plan. The Working Group established a 7-member expert group, in collaboration with and support of UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA. While three of the experts oversee the process in its entirety, four are in charge of specific thematic areas seen as key for the Strategy, namely justice, security, health and social services policy. The process aims to be inclusive and transparent, requesting participation and inputs from numerous women's CSOs and independent experts. This Strategic document will be drafted in March 2021 and referred to a formal adoption procedure, consultation process and public hearing.

Practically in parallel, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue initiated the process of drafting three key laws, namely the *Law on Gender Equality*, *Law on Same-Sex*

Partnership and the *Law on Elimination of Discrimination*. While the process is structured differently, calling for expert and CSO engagement once the initial drafts of the laws are made, it also places high value on wide-reaching inclusion, consultations and transparency, and it enjoys support from the UN.

In addition to these significant legislative initiatives, capacity building work has begun for the introduction of a Gender Equality Test – a mechanism that would assist civil servants to ensure that gender perspective is integrated in all new legislation before it reaches the parliament.

The end of the year forced the attention of the public to the issue of violence against women and girls. Right as the campaign “16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence” came to a close, a string of dramatic incidents of violence against women including a number of femicides took place, catapulting the issue to the front pages again. By New Years it was estimated that 28 women were killed in family or partner violence.

By mid-January the public was awash again in scandal related to sexual and psychological abuse of women and girls when multiple accusations were made against a renowned acting professor Miroslav Aleksić by his former students. The incident initiated not only a heated debate in Serbia, but had reverberations throughout the Western Balkan region where similar accusations surfaced. While the public discourse was generally dominated by show of support, it also revealed a parallel existence of entrenched gender biases and proclivity for victim-blaming.

WOMEN & COVID-19:

What governments can do now

Ensure economic stimulus packages include social protections measures; including health insurance benefits for those most in need and paid and/or sick leave for those unable to work because of domestic care responsibilities.



Photos: UN Women/Ryan Brown; Photo: UN Women/Tayfun Dakic; UN Women/Joe Saeed

WOMEN & COVID-19:

What governments can do now

Include women in response and recovery decision-making.



Photos: UN Women/Rena Effendi; UN Women/Ryan Brown; UN Women/Assane Gueye

WOMEN & COVID-19:

What governments can do now

Support equal sharing of care and domestic work at home. Make a commitment by joining our HeForShe campaign.



Photos: UN Women/Giulio Stappan; UN Women/Rena Effendi



COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Under the project ‘**Improved Safety of Women in Serbia**’, funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UN Women continued its support in building Serbian society free from gender-based discrimination and violence.

The project builds on the strong links of UN Women with women’s civil society organizations (CSOs) in the country, as they have a crucial role in the promotion of gender equality and women’s rights. They are the key advocates in terms of moving governments from the point of commitment towards implementation of international normative standards. Furthermore, they are the key stakeholders providing services for women at risk of violence and in ensuring that the perspectives and voices of the most excluded and discriminated-against groups of women are heard by policy makers. In that respect, Call for Proposals (CFP) for civil society organizations was published in December. Selected organizations will be supported to deliver a comprehensive multi-sectoral set of activities aimed at increasing the knowledge of rural women, especially those from vulnerable groups facing multiple discrimination, to recognize and report cases of violence against women and girls and/or gender-based discrimination. The budget range for the proposals should be up to USD 20,000. CFP was closed on 18 January 2021. The project is expected to be carried out in a 12-month period, i.e. between the months of April 2021 and April 2022.

Further steps were taken to purchase ICT equipment needed for piloting a new monitor-

ing system for victim protection – the bracelet for victim(s) and perpetrator(s) system in 10 out of 27 Regional Police Directorates in Serbia. This innovative practice will enhance the realization of urgent measures for victims’ protection against perpetrators of violence. The bidder was chosen, and the equipment has been procured from an Israeli company producing an electronic monitoring system.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic, parliamentary elections, and the long process of forming the Government have led to certain slowdowns in project realization of the components with the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the Commissioner for Protection of Equality (CPE). Nevertheless, partnerships have not been weakened and anything that has not been realized in 2020 will be made up in 2021. Despite new circumstances, any major issues with these project components are not expected, especially bearing in mind the significance of the project itself and benefits that it brings.

Following CPE’s reappointment, consultation process with her was reinitiated and intensified, leading to a drafted Partner Agreement which is scheduled to be signed in the spring of 2021. The support will be aimed at capacity building of the CPE to raise awareness and confidence of rural women about measures and actors responsible for protection from violence and gender-based discrimination.

Due to insufficient capacities and lack of solid institutional framework for promoting zero tolerance to violence, the media in Ser-

bia often feeds into gender-stereotypes, perpetuates traditional social norms and ‘victim blaming’, and condones violence against women and girls (VAWG) and gender-based discrimination. Furthermore, secondary victimization often originates from inappropriate media reporting on VAWG, harms victims in numerous ways, causing severe physical and emotional consequences. As a step towards better, more ethical and more professional media coverage of VAWG cases in Serbia, the project conducted the first ever analysis that addresses how this issue is treated on social media. Specifically, the analysis looks into social media posts of Serbian traditional media and the subsequent debate that took place on these platforms regarding the news about VAWG and femicides during the lockdown.

Reaching out to as many women as possible, especially those at risk of violence, has remained one of the project’s top priorities. Therefore, the campaign ‘*You are not alone! Report violence!*’ was launched in late November under the umbrella of a global campaign “16 days of Activism,” in partnership with the MOI, Norwegian Embassy and the EU Delegation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the campaign was conducted on the street, via traditional and social media, as well as in residential buildings. The campaign was finalized on 10 December 2020. Following are its key results: 5,000 elevators in Belgrade have the campaign poster displayed in them indefinitely; 4 million reach on social media; over 40 broadcasts of the campaign’s video on RTS with an average of 250,000 viewers



Violence is not confined to the battlefield. For many women and girls, the threat looms largest where they should be safest. In their own homes.

ANTONIO GUTERRES
UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL

@unwomen



The increase in violence against women must be dealt with urgently with measures embedded in economic support and stimulus packages that meet the gravity and scale of the challenge and reflect the needs of women who face multiple forms of discrimination.

PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA
UN WOMEN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



reached per broadcast; 16 billboards placed in 6 major cities across Serbia for 2 weeks.

In close cooperation with programme partners, UN Women continued its work on the Phase II of the Regional Programme on Ending Violence against Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey **'Implementing Norms, Changing Minds.'** Programme's efforts are aimed towards reviewing and reforming relevant laws and policies to align them with international human rights standards, namely CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention, as well as increasing the understanding among women, girls, men and boys at both community and individual levels of gender equality concepts, and supporting providers of specialized support services for victims of all forms of violence to improve their case management practices, especially when it comes to their work with women and girls from minorities and disadvantaged groups.

As an alternative channel of communication, which would enable women to silently alarm SOS helpline service in a case of danger and exposure to violence and abuse, **SOS Network Vojvodina** successfully developed the SOS helpline mobile application (for both iOS and Android operating systems) and accompanying SOS information system (SOS IS) for generating reports from the mobile application for further data management and statistics gathering. In total 10 women CSOs started testing the SOS helpline mobile application and SOS IS on November 1, 2020, while its launching is expected in the second quarter of 2021 following a media campaign to increase the visibility of SOS helpline mobile application in the country. In addition, a wide coalition of gender experts and other

specialized women's organizations has been formed with the aim of monitoring the progress of the implementation of the CEDAW Concluding Observations to the Fourth Periodic Report of Serbia. The group has initiated drafting of the *Follow-up Shadow Report* to be submitted by May 2021 latest.

In addition to issuing information packages and providing media statements about the state's domestic and international obligations in terms of eliminating and preventing violence against women and girls, and the general backlash to gender parity and feminism, the **Association Fenomena** has been providing mentoring support to 20 journalists on ethical reporting on VAWG cases. They also initiated research of policy and laws pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic and their implementation, violence against women in Serbia, related backlash, and the response of responsible institutions. Finally, they extended the SOS helpline working time by four additional hours, therefore making the licenced SOS service available 8 hours a day, from 10-18h, each working day.

Center for Support of Women has been ensuring continuous services at three existing Centres for Victims of Sexual Violence (CVSVs) in Vojvodina province, namely those in Novi Sad, Zrenjanin and Kikinda, and has managed to re-establish the CVSV at the Sremska Mitrovica General Hospital. In addition, to ensure the full implementation of health standards within CVSVs operations and to improve coordination and cooperation with other services providers, the Centre developed three protocols: a Protocol to ensure mandatory testing for infectious and other sexually transmitted diseases in injuries inflicted during sexual violence; a Pro-

tol to ensure the improved coordination of the hospitals' working groups and groups for coordination and cooperation within the Public Prosecution Office; and, in order to expand the scope of health care institutions involved in providing direct assistance to women victims of sexual violence, a Protocol for CVSVs communication and cooperation with primary health care centres and gynaecological ambulances. In cooperation with the Medical Faculty of the University of Novi Sad, the Centre developed an educational programme, accredited by the Health Council of Serbia, focusing on the role the health sector has in the protection of women victims of violence. Furthermore, the Centre developed an Online Learning Platform with the aim to improve the knowledge and skills of healthcare professionals to effectively provide health services to women victims of sexual violence, increase knowledge and skills for collaboration and communication within multisectoral teams, and to improve the knowledge and skills for documenting and recording domestic violence, gender-based violence, and sexual violence.

With the aim of gathering in-depth insight of various shortcomings or weaknesses that exist within the system in local contexts during and after crises, CSO **...Iz kruga – Vojvodina** has generated data on existing services and needs of women with disabilities by mapping and contacting 52 service providers, interviewing 26 service providers, contacting 41 NGOs, interviewing 25 women with disabilities, and reviewing 13 protocols within 10 targeted municipalities. The survey showed that there were no specialized services available for women with disabilities during the emergency situation in any of the target municipalities.

SHADOW PANDEMIC

COVID-19 &
Domestic Violence



The biggest obstacles to working with women with disabilities that have been perceived are: 1. architectural inaccessibility of institutions, supported by the deep-rooted misconception that universal design is unprofitable and expensive; 2. small number of engaged experts, insufficiently educated and insensitive professional staff; 3. mentality of professionals (stereotypes, prejudices, and stigmatization). ... Iz Kruga – Vojvodina also prepared a Brochure outlining ways to identify and respond to violence and mapping out the existing support services specifically addressing women with disabilities. The brochure was published in 480 copies, prepared in audio-video format and distributed to women with different types of disabilities. In addition, seventeen women from targeted municipalities were empowered through provision of individual psychological support and other SOS services. In total the organization provided 91 of these services. ... Iz Kruga – Vojvodina also established a new service – psychological support to mothers exposed to violence who have children with disabilities. Eleven of these services were provided to 3 women from the target municipalities, and 300 protective masks with transparent window were produced and distributed to women with hearing impairment, their family members and sign language interpreters. Finally, two initiatives towards service providers to consider the specific needs of women with hearing impairment were designed and implemented. All this was followed by 15 articles being published on the Disability Portal, 16 media reports on project activities prepared and one short film showcasing the lives of women with disabilities who are exposed to violence produced.

Gender Knowledge Hub, FemPlatz and Women Research Centre have collected all data (court casefiles, case studies, media reporting) on femicide cases and attempted femicides in 2018-2019 and analysed them. More precisely they analysed 103 court casefiles and 10 case studies. At the same time, a desk analysis of state responses to femicide in 13 selected EU countries showed that none of the selected countries has established a system which is in every aspect effective and efficient in femicide prevention and prosecution. The three organizations also drafted a protocol for femicide review investigation, to be used by the prosecution, and are currently drafting a protocol in the areas of social policy. In cooperation with the Judiciary Academy, two trainings on “*Judiciary Response to Femicide*”, covering definition of femicide, characteristics and causes of femicide, key challenges in legal qualifications of femicide in Serbia, and Guidelines for preventing femicide – the role of prosecutors and judges, as well as multisectoral cooperation, was held for 27 participants (22 women, 5 men) in October 2020, in Nis. As a result, 90% of training participants report on improved knowledge to adequately assess the risks of femicide as well as to investigate femicide cases. Finally, the fifth issue of e-newsletter about prevention and eradication of femicide was published in October 2020 containing *In memoriam* texts about Diana Russel (selected speeches about femicide), and focusing on global coordination of local forces, recommendations from the Manual for practical approach to preventing, solving, and documenting cases of violence against women during COVID-19 crisis, offer-

ing a presentation of selected final court decisions on femicide cases, and reviewing media reporting about femicide cases in 2020.

Finally, an addendum to the donor agreement for Phase II of the programme ‘**Implementing norms, changing minds**’ was signed in December 2020, noting additional funding for the programme and extending programme duration until July 2023. Within the addendum, UN Women Serbia, in close partnership with leading civil society organizations, will be implementing the following additional activities:

- Improving the quality standards for shelters based on a gendered understanding of violence against women; the empowerment of victims and a victim-centred and integrated approach to service provision and enabling procedurally functional shelter’s services during the COVID-19 crisis and in the post crisis period.
- Building service providers’ digital skills to efficiently deliver SOS and psychosocial support using online applications and to instruct users on how to use digital communication channels to access services, with a specific focus on instructing women with disabilities.
- Increasing the professional capacities and the number of professional staff engaged in free legal aid service provision to address the needs of at least 200 women.
- Supporting the Groups for Coordination and Cooperation to develop individual safety plans for survivors of violence.
- Providing Roma women, survivors of violence, with economic reintegration opportunities.

“WE MUST NOT ONLY SURVIVE THE CORONAVIRUS, BUT EMERGE RENEWED...”





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UN WOMEN
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women



Building on previous efforts of UN agencies and the Government of Serbia, the **'Integrated Response to Violence Against Women and Girls in Serbia III'** project was launched on November 30, 2020 by Zorana Mihajlović - Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, H.E. Jan Lundin - Ambassador of Sweden to Serbia, and Francine Pickup - UNDP Resident Representative on behalf of UN agencies. This is the third phase of the work of UN agencies in Serbia (UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women and UNFPA) and the Government of Serbia, headed by the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, to end violence against women and girls. Other implementing national partners include the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry for Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, Ministry for Family and Demography, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality. The project is supported by the Government of Sweden.

Through the partnership of different stakeholders, including state institutions and bodies, women's civil society organizations and the media, project activities are dedicated to making sure that violence is effectively sanctioned, that women and children exposed to violence are protected and receive timely support, and that citizens are informed about the causes and consequences and unacceptability of violence.

During project implementation, UN agencies especially focus on:

- Further improving **reporting of domestic violence** and making sure that any gaps in the existing implementation of legislation are overcome;
- **Improving service provision to women from vulnerable** groups as well as ensuring sustainability of provision of support by specialized NGOs;
- Making sure **responsible professionals are better prepared** to prevent the escalation and repetition of violence and ensure safety of survivors;
- **Mobilizing youth** in local communities around the topic of the unacceptability of gender-based violence and promotion of gender equality;
- Encouraging parents to apply positive disciplining of children and working towards **ending child marriage**;
- Supporting responsible and **ethical media reporting** on violence against women and girls.

The project also supports national partners, institutions and bodies of the Government of Serbia, in the **development of a new strategic document addressing violence against women and domestic violence**. The process, officially announced on December 29, 2020, is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs and the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, but includes broad and active participation of national partners, institutions and bodies, experts and civil society organizations. Support of UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women and UNFPA) throughout the process should ensure the development of a comprehensive document putting survivors at the center of all activities and ensuring integrated response, as well as compliance with international standards on gender equality and elimination of violence.

**"... WITH WOMEN
AS A POWERFUL
FORCE AT THE CENTRE
OF RECOVERY."**

**PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA,
UN WOMEN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



Support to Priority Actions for
Gender Equality in Serbia



SUPPORT TO PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN SERBIA

As part of the project **‘Support to Priority Actions for Gender Equality in Serbia,’** the Gender Equality Facility Serbia, funded by the European Commission within the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) II, UN Women supports the Government of the Republic of Serbia in effective implementation of the EU Gender Equality Acquis and the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016 – 2020.

UN Women Serbia supported **Women’s Platform for Development of Serbia** to organize virtual *CSO Sub-regional consultations for the Western Balkans and Turkey*. A national campaign was launched on social media prior to the consultations as a way to include women from different social groups and different age groups and to raise awareness of the main discussions from Sub-regional consultations. With a total of 143 participants from 22 countries, the first three CSO-driven consultations were held in September and tackled key issues and recommendations under the topics of Climate Justice and Innovation and Technology, in addition to the General discussion. The goal was to engage, in an efficient way, women’s rights CSOs and key stakeholders from the Western Balkans and Turkey and to shape the blueprints of gender equality action in the coming years. The virtual consultations identified specific issues faced by the CSOs and provided concrete recommendations to address them. Furthermore, three reports, one for each of the virtual consultations, and

two policy briefs for thematic consultations were produced as outcomes. The national consultations were held on 27 October gathering CSOs and National Gender Machinery from Serbia (CBGE, GFP, local GEMs) with the aim of opening a dialogue between civil society and gender equality mechanisms as a way to promote partnership between GEMs and civil society in terms of understanding, formulation and implementation of feminist initiatives, which involves different groups in the decision-making processes.

Annual awards for the most active local gender equality mechanisms in the field of gender equality promotion at the local level were awarded to the five selected local self-governments (LSGs), with the aim of promoting examples of good practice and thus encouraging other LSGs to engage more in this area. Awards were presented in four categories: work of local GEMs (Arandjelovac), engagement and coordination of LSG and other actors in the field of gender equality (Kruševac and Knić), innovative policies and practices in the field of gender equality (Sombor) and, mitigation of the consequences of the COVID-19 virus epidemic (Raška).

UN Women Serbia supported the Republic Secretariat for Public Policies as it introduced systematic inclusion of gender perspective in drafting of new regulations. It also provided technical support to relevant ministries in fulfilling **Gender Equality Test** in order to strengthen civil servants and ensure that gender perspective is systematically included in drafting of new regulations. A day-long, online, tailor-made training was held for seven staff members of the Republic Secretariat

for Public Policies. The implementation of the Gender Equality Test was explained through a practical exercise of testing two laws as examples. Based on the evaluation, the advancement in knowledge after the training was 68%. Technical support for successful use of the Test for Gender Equality was also provided to civil servants from two ministries.

UN Women Office in Serbia continues to support the Coordination Body for Gender Equality’s engagement in dialogue with key stakeholders, including academia and women’s organizations. The objective is to facilitate the establishment of a mechanisms for a nation-wide dialogue that would include key stakeholders, including women’s organizations, CSOs, parliament, academia, gender experts and media. Under the initiative aimed at improving women’s position in academia **‘Women’s Academic Platform – United for Knowledge,’** two databases have been developed; one of women and men in academia who joined the initiative and the other of independent experts in gender equality, women’s human rights and gender mainstreaming, etc. The databases can be found at <https://udruzenezaznanje.org/baza/>. Women’s Academic Platform was created as a way to introduce an intellectual perspective to the overall effort to advance gender equality principles, thus also helping to provide necessary tools for the empowerment of women in academia effects, media and civil society and to serve as a partner to state institutions in policy making area. The main results of the platform’s work were presented at the three online debates organized in October at the Uni-

versities of Niš, Belgrade and Novi Sad and final one including representatives from all universities in Serbia. The debates focused on the ways to remove the existing barriers to the scientific development of women in each institution specifically, and at the University system overall.

The cooperation with the National Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia to support the development of a new edition of **Gender Equality Index** has been established. The Gender Index will be developed jointly with the Statistical Office, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, and the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, with the support of the European Institute for Gender Equality. National Report on Gender Equality Index for Serbia will provide more visibility to the areas that need improvement and will serve as an invaluable tool to policy makers working to design more effective gender equality measures.

Under the scope of the project, UN Women Office also supported the Government’s efforts and provided technical guidance in **ex-post analysis of the National Strategy for Gender Equality** for the years 2016-2020, in line with the Law on Planning System.

In cooperation with **Society of Women Architects (ŽAD)**, UN Women assessed the **gender aspect in urban planning policies** and prepared **tools for practitioners** on gender responsive urban planning. The aim of the partnership was to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable gender-responsive urban development, by supporting cooperation and capacity building of urban actors, and facilitating innovative actions, knowledge,



Support to Priority Actions for
Gender Equality in Serbia



policy development and communication in this area. To test the toolboxes on gender responsive urban planning, in partnership with the Delegation of the European Union (EUD), ŽAD organized online consultation with practitioners and final presentation of the findings in December.

UN Women partnered with the RES foundation for joint **gender assessment of energy poverty, energy consumption** and development of the **first ever gender sensitive inventory of particulate matter (PM) emissions**. Additionally, partnership was developed with Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of Serbia to create synergy, join forces and resources to implement the national survey on energy poverty. As a result, the first ever gender sensitive inventory of PM emissions was developed. UN Women participated in and presented this joint work at the annual conference on air quality and pollution in Serbia. The analysis initiated the consultation process between the UN Women, the EUD and the Ministry of Energy and Mining, leading to a joined planning of new intervention in the area of gender respective energy efficiency.

Online training on the EU Green Deal and EU GAP III was organized by UN Women in partnership with the EU Delegation in Serbia. The main objective of the training was to enhance environmental and gender knowledge, and to provide the tools to ensure the inclusion of (or to mainstream) gender perspective in the EU funded programs. Training gathered more than 45 participants from EU Delegations from across the Western Balkans - mainly infrastruc-

ture and environment project managers and gender focal points, representatives of UN Women Offices, the RES Foundation, SeCons Development Initiative Group, EIGE, DG Environment, DG NEAR, independent experts, and others.

First Multisectoral Public Dialog on Gender Equality was organized on 18 January in the Palace on Serbia. This hybrid event brought together about almost 100 participants, among which were the representatives of the state, UN Serbia, international organizations, as well as the NGO sector.

During the event marking the **20th anniversary of the Women's Platform for Development of Serbia**, two round tables on economic empowerment of women were organized, dedicated specifically to women entrepreneurship and to agriculture. Participants summarized the progress and gave recommendations for the further policy interventions in the area. Common conclusion was that the COVID-19 pandemics reversed the fragile progress in these areas. Entrepreneurship support is still orientated towards male businesses that are also more profitable, and so it is necessary to find a balance through affirmative measures. Women organize businesses as sole-traders, and as such have very limited access to financial resources as well as benefits from the state during pregnancy and sick leave. In agriculture, it is necessary to make policies gender sensitive, particularly when it comes to subsidies. There is a distinct need to re-focus on new knowledge and agriculture practices that would help diminishing the risk of climate change. Improvements are related to the adoption of new selling

modality form small producers. Provision of services also needs to be improved, in order to help make rural areas better places for living.

During this period the associations implemented a series of activities for economic empowerment of women. **Association of Roma Women Osvit** supported 52 Roma women undergo vocational trainings at the University of Nis and facilitated employment of 3 women, among which 2 healthcare workers. CSO **...Iz Kruga - Beograd**, together with **Fem Platz**, supported activities for the empowerment of women with disabilities for employment and self-employment.

GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

UN Women continued to support Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) implementation and institutionalization at all governmental levels. As a result of partnership between the Ministry of Finance, the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, the Provincial Secretariat of Finance and UN Women, 42 institutions at national and all 26 institutions on the provincial level applied GRB in their budgets for 2021, thus contributing to the improvement of the position of women and advancing gender equality.

UN Women concluded its implementation of the project **'Supporting Implementation of Gender Responsive Budgeting at Local Level'**. Having in mind that the Project aimed to contribute to the improvement of the quality of lives of women and men in 10 local self-government units (LSGs) across

Serbia, UN Women had supported LSGs to apply GRB in their financial plans and draft budgets. As a result of UN Women's support, all 10 LSGs received mentoring support for introducing GRB, as well as ready-made proposals with gender sensitive goals and indicators to be integrated into the budget, including those for Program 11 pertaining to social and child protections services for the period 2021-2023. Following our efforts, municipalities of Plandište, Krupanj, Kosjerić, Ruma, Prijepolje, Mionica, Užice and Šid have submitted their financial plans and/or budgets for 2021, in which, with our support, they successfully implemented GRB including for Program 11. Moreover, in order to increase the knowledge of civil servants about gender responsive budgeting, UN Women has developed an e-learning platform **People Centered Budget**, containing 4 modules related to gender equality and GRB at the local level.

During the reporting period, UN Women in cooperation with local women's CSO ŽUKO has piloted an innovative service called the "Octopus" in Mionica municipality. The Octopus service meets real needs of rural women in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. In response to women's needs, the service has spilled over to girls and boys attending primary and secondary school. Over the course of the one-month-long pilot phase, 47 women as well as 7 girls and 6 boys directly benefited from the service. The service demonstrated a clear need among rural women for psycho-social support, parenting support, and help with socializing and networking. This serves to prove that women in rural areas are socially excluded, and



it highlights the fact that they feel weak as individuals and need a sense of belonging to a group. Their ability to socialize and network contributes greatly to the self-confidence and fulfilment of the participating women, according to their own statements.

To ensure systematic integration of gender equality in all stages of national and local policy making and budgeting processes, UN Women initiated a 4-year regional project **‘Transformative Financing for Gender Equality towards more Transparent, Inclusive, and Accountable Governance in the Western Balkans’**, financed by the Government of Sweden. Under this project, gender focal points from 6 institutions were capacitated to support the introduction and monitoring of GRB in their institutions. UN Women partnered with the National Academy for Public Administration, with an intent of further GRB institutionalization, focusing on the introduction of GRB courses in their annual curricula. To contribute to the development of crises responses that take into account different needs of women and men, particularly multi-discriminated groups, UN Women conducted the gender analysis of COVID-19-related budget reallocations that occurred during 2020, with a particular focus on economy and culture. The analysis showed that there is a need for inclusion of gender expertise in the process of response development, including consultations with women’s CSOs. Although economic measures targeting micro, small, and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs) were swiftly introduced, and benefited women-owned businesses that fall under these categories, the opportunity to work more actively on reducing the

barriers for women entrepreneurs in accessing support measures was missed.

GENDER RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE – REDISTRIBUTION OF UNPAID CARE WORK

Through the project **‘Gender Responsive Governance – Redistribution of Unpaid Care Work,’** implemented in close cooperation with the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Republic of Serbia and with the contribution of the United Kingdom’s Good Governance Fund, UN Women initiated a much-needed nation-wide discussion about the unequal distribution of care work. It is somewhat thought-provoking that this topic has not yet been widely covered by existing public policies, nor has it been in the focus of activities of civil society organizations, neither in Serbia nor in the wider Western Balkans region. As UN Women is essentially pioneering the issue, it is truly systematic in its approach - recognizing that a problem exists and analyzing it; collecting information; identifying and evaluating possible causes and solutions; developing an action plan and taking action!

By calculating the contributions of unpaid care work to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and economic growth, and by providing concrete data on the economic short- and long-term impact of higher public investments as well as concluding policy recommendations, UN Women laid the groundwork for the first gender analysis of the *Economic Value of Unpaid Care Work in Serbia*. Ever since, UN Women has been challenging

the existing norms and traditions, and advocating for policy and practice changes in the economy of care.

Building on the momentum provided by the analysis of the economic aspects of unpaid care work, UN Women decided to go one step further and support the publication of a *Gender Analysis of Legal Norms in the Area of Economy of Care in the Republic of Serbia* as well. This analysis of the most relevant laws regulating economy of care and the effects they have on the way economy of care is valued, thus also determining the position of women, focuses on whether and how the existing legal norms and practices are discriminatory as well as on the extent to which unpaid work should be the ground for amendments to regulations. Women, especially those from rural areas, have no or limited information or understanding of their rights and entitlements in numerous life situations. At the same time, women are especially burdened by the care work they perform, which is not economically valued and which often puts them in an unfavorable position.

The valuable findings of the two analyses, together with 6 additional local needs analyses done by project partners, serve as irrefutable evidence in support of policy changes, as well as a strong argument for testing and upscaling of policy initiatives advancing equal distribution of unpaid work and care work in the society.

UN Women also continued to support ten women’s civil society organizations developing and piloting initiatives that advance redistribution of unpaid care work at the local level. They have successfully imple-





mented and brought to a close a total of 14 local innovative initiatives tackling the following aspects of the economy of care:

- Gender equality in parenting and caregiving responsibilities;
- Challenging the existing stereotypes that promote unequal sharing of care work;
- Promoting father's involvement in child-care and benefits of paternity leave;
- Establishing the first National Association of Nannies;
- Establishing new, innovative services that address unpaid work performed by rural women;
- Providing counseling services for informal caregivers of dependent persons, and creating the first National Association for Alzheimer's disease;
- Raising awareness among youth about the dynamics of the economy of care.

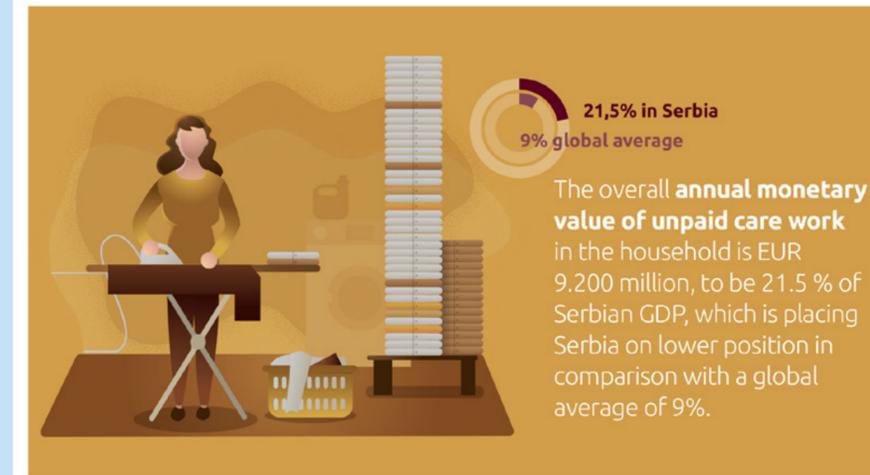
Through our partners - Association for Development of Creativity, Women Association of Kolubara District, Amity, SeConS, Association for Affirmation of Women's Potential and Networking, Center E8, Fenomena, Associa-

tion of Women Sandglass, Women's Forum Prijepolje and International Aid Network, we have been present in Aleksinac and its 7 rural communities, Valjevo region, Čačak, Kragujevac, Belgrade, Šabac, Kraljevo, Zaječar, Kruševac and its 5 municipalities, Prijepolje, Zlatar and Zlatibor regions, with a myriad initiatives engaging urban and rural women, youth and the elderly, business sector, and local self-governments.

Gender analysis of *Economic Value of the Unpaid Care Work in the Republic of Serbia* pointed to an increase in time women in Serbia spend caring for children and dependent family members over the last few years. The COVID-19 crisis placed an additional load of care work on women's shoulders and made their disproportionate burden more visible. Capacities of our partners implementing local initiatives have also been tested during the COVID-19 state of emergency in Serbia. In the situation of limited mobility and/or isolation of the elderly during the quarantine, closure of schools and introduction of online schooling, widespread practice of working from home, the importance and value added of these pilot services has been additionally confirmed.

Support to women in Serbia during and after the COVID-19 crisis

- Advocating for the introduction of local services that could partially replace the unpaid care work;
- Advocating for change of discriminatory legal practices;
- Estimated costs of the unpaid care work - in net terms every woman that was engaged in unpaid care work failed to earn more than 6,500 EUR per year;
- Estimated total value of the unpaid care work is 21.5% of Serbia's GDP;
- 14 pilot initiatives undertaken within 15 municipalities;
- Over 24,000 women and men directly benefited from the project activities;
- 5 baby changing facilities across the country;
- Over 1,4 million of women and men reached through project activities;
- First Analysis of monetary value of unpaid care work in Serbia;
- First Alzheimer Association in Serbia;
- First Association of Nannies in Serbia.





SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

In 2020, UNFPA continued supporting finalization of the Action Plan for implementation of the National Programme for Sexual and Reproductive Health of the citizens of Serbia in partnership with the Ministry of Health. Action Plan has been focused on the information/awareness raising, youth and vulnerable groups. Working group submitted the draft Action Plan to the Ministry of Health on December 2020, for the final processing after the long pause in activities caused by COVID-19 epidemics.

UNFPA partnered with the UNICEF and the European Union to support **MICS Round 6**. Field work was completed by the end of 2019. On 27 October 2020, findings of MICS 6 were released on media conference organised jointly by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, (UNFPA) and the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia. Report available from https://www.stat.gov.rs/media/5612/mics6_report_serbia.pdf

With implementing partner Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre, UNFPA implemented 11 basics workshop and 6 advanced workshops for peer educators on adolescents sexual and reproductive health in Loznica, Kikinda, Sjenica, Kraljevo, Bor and Kragujevac. More than 270 adolescents, students of secondary schools improved their knowledge about SRH, while 96 were trained to become peer educators.

On November 18, 2020 UNFPA HQ launched a **Guide for Out-of-school Comprehensive Sexuality Education**. Guide was promoted during the Dialog Cafe Session held on 30

November 2020. Preparation of a version in Serbian is ongoing, and will be distributed to all relevant partners.

COVID-19

UNFPA contributed to **UNCT Socio Economic impact of COVID-19** through research on topics and targets group which are directly related with UNFPA mandate: SRH, gender/gender-based violence, young people and older people, in order to collect data for creating the evidence based and targeted response and recovery plan.

UNFPA in cooperation with UN Women, conducted a **Rapid Gender assessment**, on a representative sample of 1,925 adult respondents, using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and its main objective was to provide insights in how COVID-19 pandemic impacted livelihoods of women and men, and if and how it influenced / (re) shaped gender inequalities. Survey examined how women and men are informed about the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employment and livelihoods of women and men, on welfare rights and social protection, on unpaid household work and family care, on access to basic services and safety, including gender-based violence. Assessment is available at <https://serbia.unfpa.org/en/publications/consequences-covid-19-womens-and-mens-economic-empowerment>

With the Ministry of Health and the Institute of Public Health UNFPA initiated participation of the Global study I-SHARE, aiming at assessment of impact of COVID-19 and mea-

sures on the access to sexual and reproductive health services, family structures, relationships, sexual behavior. Study is led by University of Ghent, and Academic Network on Sexual and Reproductive Health (ANSER) and coordinated by UNFPA RO. Results will be launched this year.

UNFPA, in partnership with the MoH, IPH Batut, Center for Family Planning and students of Medicine, organized virtual education of students and raising awareness activity among young people about importance of effective contraception and preserving reproductive health, including in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The revised Guidelines on contraception was delivered by post to all primary and relevant secondary and tertiary health care institutions.

UNFPA and Out of Circle Vojvodina implemented activities related to improving **advocacy skills of women with disabilities** to advocate for their health and rights in Raska, Uzice, Temerin, Valjevo and Vranje. Good communication with local decision makers was established during the project implementation. In Raska local government initiated a process for procurement of hydraulic gynecology chair and in Vranje MoU was signed between CSO and Health Center on improving access to health services of women with disabilities. At the final Project Conference, it was decided to establish the Initiative of Women with Disabilities for the Advocacy for Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Serbia, which will initially function through a working Facebook group. The group will soon open to the public and the inclusion of new members, while current members will have the opportunity to become trainers for the ad-

vocacy in the future. The Initiative of Women with Disabilities will continue to work on improving sexual and reproductive health and the rights of women with disabilities.

See a **story** about change-makers in Serbia: 5 women with disabilities who are championing sexual and reproductive health.



Regarding **mental health**, UNFPA together with implementing partner PIN since September 2020 has been providing psychological support to the COVID-19 patients and their family members, with the focus on vulnerable groups including older people, pregnant women/mothers and youth. In addition, targeted sessions were organized to mitigate burnout among care providers.



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

During October, UNFPA jointly with implementing Partner NGO ATINA, organized 4 online trainings on Access to the rights and services for refugees and asylum seekers in protection of gender-based violence, for localization of **GBViE Standard Operating Procedures**. 134 local service providers engaged in the provision of assistance to refugees and migrants.

With Danish Refugee Council, UNFPA supported the organization of the awareness raising activities for women from migrant/refugee/asylum seeker populations accommodated in 6 governmental centres, about the availability and access to GBV services after abolishing state of emergency, as well as about importance of observing COVID-19 infection prevention measures. The essential hygienic items were distributed to 511 women and girls.

ENGAGING MEN

As part of its gender transformative programming, UNFPA partnered with RTS and produced a show that promotes positive gender norms and responsible fatherhood. 13 episodes with male angle in focus, feature interviews with celebrity and non-celebrity fathers, and also cover gender equality, male health, role of fathers in the process of education, projects and activities of domestic and international organizations, parenting around the world and other important topics. First episode was aired on 25 December on RTS, and all episodes are placed also on a dedicated **YouTube channel**.

EMPOWERING GIRLS

At the cluster level, UNFPA Serbia and UNFPA BiH in partnership with the private sector and CSOs initiated **Girls Advanced Lab**, an initiative to support adolescent girls, i.e. to support development and implementation of the innovative ideas to improve girls' access to education, improve equality and raise awareness of healthy lifestyles. Call was launched on 10 December 2020 and initiative will be implemented throughout the year.

OLDER WOMEN AND AGEING

Research on Influence of COVID-19 on older people was conducted in July and August and presented to the UNCT on 30 October. Research provided recommendations about access to health services, mental health, long term care services, financial security, digital inclusion, elder abuse and ageism and intergenerational cooperation. Research was a basis for UNFPA's inputs in SEIA and for programming of UNFPA activities since September.

Research about **status of older people in Serbia**, which included desk review of normative framework and available evidence life conditions and challenges of older people, and qualitative and quantitative research about older people's perceptions and attitudes about their status has been completed in November 2020. It will inform the comprehensive report on status of older people, including older women, which will be issued in 2021 and presented to decision makers jointly with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality.

Over two thirds of informal caregivers in Europe are women, and Serbia is not far behind. Research on **mental health of informal caregivers** was conducted in July and August 2020. Research findings with recommendations on how to improve care givers' quality of life and mental health and how to develop services for their support, were presented to media on 27 November and to professionals and relevant stakeholders on November 30.

To promote **intergenerational cooperation and community engagement** in relation to COVID-19 epidemic UNFPA Mikser Organization project- *Connect to (ex)Change* explored innovative solutions for trainings in using IT and intergenerational exchange with *support from the Government of Germany*. Tutorial for Skype, Viber, Facebook with famous actress Rada Djuricin was developed to promote digital inclusion and will be aired in gerontology centers throughout the year. Several short movies that promote intergenerational cooperation for the benefit of all generations were featured on a virtual film festival on 15 December via Zoom and Youtube <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=MrYbLoJfia0> with more than 500 visitors from UN, diplomatic community, and general public in Serbia.

In partnership with the Red Cross, UNFPA supported **networking and telephone-based peer support** services for 250 older persons (50 in each of five communities), to ensure their psychological resilience and social participation. In addition, face to face digital coaching engaged 170 older persons who increased their knowledge on use of digital technology of their choice.

UNFPA together with the IP Belgrade centre for human rights is implementing activities

focused on skills exchange and intergenerational psychosocial support. 11 pairs, i.e. SOFA couples, (including one younger and one older person) prepared 11 online and offline local activities and reached out to other young and older people from the community, encouraging solidarity and further transferring of the knowledge and skills acquired in these online trainings.

**A SURGE
IN VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN
AND GIRLS.**

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS TEAM

In January 2021, the UN Human Rights Team in Serbia with support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) organized an online consultation with Roma-Women-Led CSOs and networks interested in applying for support from the UN Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery to challenge child marriage in South-Eastern Europe. Previously consulted Roma Women-Led organizations and networks from Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Hercegovina who are willing to directly assist victims of child marriage were informed in detail about the Fund's mandate, the procedure for annual grants, administrative requirement and gender integration into programmes. The UN Human Rights Team will provide technical assistance in the application process and the deadline for the call for proposals is 1 March 2021.

Revised International Classification of Diseases (ICD 11), adopted in 2019 by the World

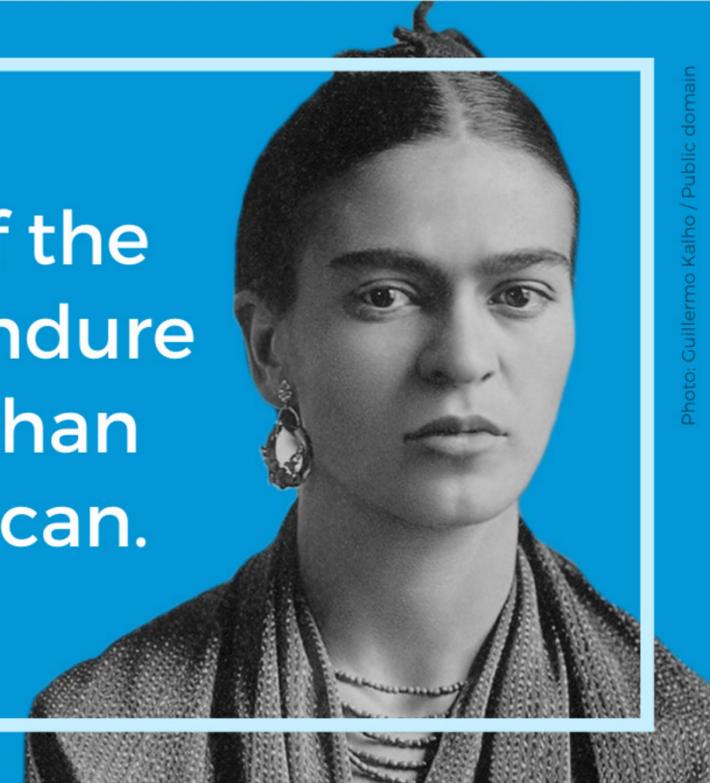
Health Assembly with a period of 3-5 years for national implementations, removes transgender identities from the list of mental health diseases. Member States have to adopt adequate measures and change necessary legislation in order to fully comply with those revisions as set in the adopted document, as starting from 2022 the reporting according to this new document will begin. During 2020, the UN Human Rights Team continued with the support of the joint work on the national implementation of ICD 11 and further depathologization of transgender identities, by facilitating consultations of all relevant State institutions, civil society organizations, transgender community and experts. There is a sound willingness among all participants, as well as strong expectations from the results of this joint work, as discrimination of transgender people in the Republic of Serbia remains high.



At the end of the day, we can endure much more than we think we can.

Frida Kahlo

Artist





FURTHER ADVANCEMENT OF MINISTRIES OF DEFENCE (MODS) AND ARMED FORCES (AFS) IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (WB) IN IMPLEMENTING UNSCR 1325 AND INCREASING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE MILITARY

UNDP SEESAC supports the governments of the region in integrating gender equality into the Security Sector Reform in accordance with the UNSCR 1325, which recognises the need for the inclusion of women as active agents in peace and human security agenda.

In October 2020, the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) was marked. Throughout 2020, UNDP SEESAC continued supporting the regional cooperation with strong focus on WPS Agenda. Ministries of Defence (MoDs) and Armed Forces (AFs) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia kept steady on their course towards gender equality and strengthening women's role in the military, despite challenging context which led to the intensive use of online means of communication.

As part of the regional cooperation through the regional platforms supported by UNDP SEESAC, two online regional meetings were organised, facilitating exchange of information and knowledge related to integrating gender perspective into various aspects of the military practice: the 12th Regional Meeting of the Gender Equality Mechanisms (GEMs) and the 5th meeting of the Regional Network of Gender Military Trainers. Both regional meetings strengthened further the regional cooperation, while increasing capacities of MoDs and AFs to implement practical solutions for mainstreaming gen-

der perspective in the military.

Cross-regional data collection for evidence-based policies resulted with the drafts of three national reports (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia) to inform the **second regional study on The Position of Women in the Armed Forces in the Western Balkans**. The national study for Serbia is yet to be completed. Once finalised, an updated set of data on gender equality in the AFs in four countries will document progress compared to the seminal baseline study published in 2014.

All four MoDs with UNDP SEESAC's support continued focusing on combating gender-based discrimination, through exchange of information and data collection. This cooperation resulted with developing the final draft of the regional Manual on Combating Gender Based Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Abuse. This important joint knowledge tool is aimed to help practitioners as well as the general workforce in the military to recognise, address, process and, most importantly, reduce and, ultimately, eradicate gender-based discrimination in the military.

Intensive engagement with MoDs continued through the implementation of the small-scale projects - a flexible framework ensuring full local ownership and ability to meet the priority needs at the national level. Within small-scale projects framework, based on the request from the MoD of North

Macedonia, twenty-four representatives of the internal complaints mechanism in the MoD and AFs participated in two capacity building seminars for mediators, focusing on the prevention of gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse, resulting with the increased awareness and ability of the mediators to address gender-related complaints within MoDs and AFs.

Focusing on building gender related knowledge of high-level decision makers, UNDP SEESAC facilitated **Gender Coach Programme (GCP)**, tailored to the needs of top-level commanding officers. GCP resulted with timely and substantive round of coaching sessions completed with the General Inspector of the MoD in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In order to **boost the opportunities for career advancement**, MoDs and AFs were offered with a variety of courses that are not limited to gender equality but to other aspects relevant for expanding women's opportunities to advance their careers. Due to travel restrictions, only one candidate from Montenegro (2nd Lieutenant, commander of platoon) participated in the online course on communication systems, organised by the Cranfield university.

The experience on integrating gender into the security sector reform in the Western Balkans was shared with other regions through the global Gender Equality Network

for Small Arms Control (GENSAC), launched by the German Federal Foreign Office in 2020 focusing on inclusion of women in policy decision making. The best practices on integrating gender in the military were shared at the South East Europe Military Intelligence Chiefs' Forum via the Online Basic Gender Seminar which resulted in expanding the pool of people in the military with increased gender awareness.



SEESAC SUPPORTED UN REGIONAL CENTRES FOR DISARMAMENT IN ASIA AND AFRICA TO MAINSTREAM GENDER IN SMALL ARMS CONTROL

In cooperation with United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) United Nations Regional Disarmament Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and Pacific (UNRCPD) and United Nations Regional Disarmament Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), UNDP SEESAC delivered a comprehensive coaching programme on mainstreaming gender in small arms control to the UNRCPD, UNREC and UNLIREC staff.

A coaching programme on mainstreaming gender in small arms control kicked off with three-day onsite sessions, from 9 to 12 March in the premises of [UNRCPD](#) in Kathmandu. Due to the COVID19 pandemic outbreak, the programme continued through April with three online workshops and was completed on April 23. The coaching programme for [UNREC](#) was delivered fully online in May and June 2020, followed by the tailor-made programme for [UNLIREC](#) in September and October 2020.

Funded by the [European Union](#), the coaching programme was implemented within a [multi-year programme](#) led by [UNODA](#) in support of gender mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse.

Within its framework and building on experience in developing and delivering training on gender and small arms control in South East Europe, SEESAC acts in an advisory capacity to the project implementation. In addition, SEESAC participates in the devel-

opment of a training manual on gender and small arms, which will be used by regional centres to deliver training to beneficiary countries in the respective regions.

The bespoke coaching programme aimed to provide comprehensive support to centres' staff, both to design and deliver training on gender and small arms and to further enhance their capacities for integrating gender perspectives into its portfolio. In doing so, the coaching programme relied on SEESAC's long-standing experience in increasing gender responsiveness of small arms control in South East Europe.

The coaching covered diverse set of topics related to main gendered concerns of small arms and build on the upcoming training manual. Participants discussed practical approaches to overcome data scarcity and apply gender analysis in small arms context, strategies to increase the participation of women in arms control, prevention on use of firearms in gender-based violence as well as linkages between norms of masculinity and misuse and demand for firearms. In addition, coaching provided insights into convergence between Women, Peace and Security and small arms control agendas and transformative approaches to boost gender responsiveness to arms control. Emphasis has been placed on designing gender responsive arms control policies and different scenarios on how to mainstream gender in arms control in a holistic manner.

The coaching proved to be an excellent forum for exchanges of experience and mutual learning. In that regard, international and regional best practices were highlighted as a means of showcasing how common barriers to advancing gender equality, are addressed in different settings.





SWISS PRO-SUPPORT TO ENHANCEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Within the comprehensive technical assistance (TA) that the Swiss PRO provides for 31 local self-governments (LGs) for capacity development and improvement of gender equality policy framework, 25 LGs established or re-established their gender equality mechanisms (GEMs) and started the process of institutional strengthening by adopting decisions on Local Action Plans. Awareness on the importance of gender equality is raised by adoption of the EU Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life in 25 LGs, along with capitalizing the interests of local assembly and council members to use the EU Charter as a tool to promote gender equality policy. Additionally, 11 LGs have formed Local Women Councilor Networks which will, *inter alia*, act to achieve the principles that guarantee a culture of equality between women and men. These networks' activities will be intensified and promoted in the following period.

In addition to this activity, in September 2020, the Programme published the Call for Proposals for Strengthening Local GEMs under the slogan "Let's Make Equality a Reality." A total of 28 LGs were selected to receive small grants in order to institutionally strengthen local GEMs to promote and advocate for gender equality in local communities. The implementation of these projects started at the end of December 2020 and they aim to improve women's participation in the decision-making process and status of women in the local community, especially in the areas of combating gender-based

violence, women's health, economic empowerment, and improving the quality of life of rural women, vulnerable, marginalized and women with disabilities.

Among 30 LGs that conducted evidence-based needs assessment and defined priorities in the development of social protection services, the majority of LGs determined the needs for the protection of victims of violence, women and children in accordance with Centres for Social Welfare data. As an example of good practice, **Požarevac established a new service in 2020 after identification of victims of violence as the priority target group.** They opted for the transitional solution in the form of counselling services for prevention of family violence and its resolution after assessing the lack of capacities to fully address this need through setting the shelter for victims of violence (safe house). The service also offers numerous sub-services such as: mediation, support to family to overcome the risk, counselling, provision of more functional attitudes amongst the family members, tailor-made support to individual family and its members, etc. Currently, the service covers 24 women victims of violence.

Socio-economic position of 147 women from vulnerable groups is improved through Swiss PRO social innovative projects implemented by LGs in partnership with local CSOs. Namely, a total of 32 women with disabilities in Vlasotince and Smederevo have improved skills for production of handcrafts while income generation will be enhanced through continuous possibility for selling of their products over the established website while a total of 115 women from rural areas in Raška and Ivanjica were empowered

through vocational training and as the outcome, 39 women were employed full or part-time which contributed to their income generation.

EU PRO-IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION OF WOMEN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The EU PRO Programme supported Second Call for MSEs to procure equipment and introduce related services through a grant scheme. Out of the 109 supported enterprises, **36 percent (39 enterprises) are owned by women.** This result represents an improvement in comparison to the First Call, where 30 percent of the supported enterprises were women-owned. Until now, 130 jobs were created as a result of this activity, with 46 percent (60 new jobs) occupied by women.

Over 2,700 women benefited under the intervention aimed at enhancing social cohesion in multi-ethnic municipalities. In total, 22 projects were implemented targeting the most vulnerable groups, contributing to their socio-economic empowerment. The most significant results pertain to creation of new jobs and income generating positions, and to provision of new skills and knowledge that are improving employability prospects for women with disabilities, Roma, young and rural women. The activity resulted in ten new employments and 90 new income generating positions, out of which 82 percent are provided for women. Furthermore, the association for the promotion of local tourism and traditional food is established by two women in the rural area of Bor.



740 million
women work in
informal
employment
worldwide.

SOURCE | ILO, Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture 2018

#coronavirus #COVID19



Globally,
84% of
lone-parent
households are
comprised of a lone
mother living with
her children.

Source | UN Women's Progress of the World's Women 2019-2020

#coronavirus #COVID19





BUILDING MORE RESILIENT RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The findings of the [COVID-19 Socio-economic Impact Assessment](#) (UN Serbia and UNDP, 2020) have shed light on inequalities regarding the impact of the situation brought on by the outbreak, including greater risk for women of suffering domestic and intimate-partner violence, increased burden of unpaid domestic work, worsening economic situation and increased health risk for frontline workers. Building on data from institutions as well as civil society organizations, UNDP is currently conducting a COVID-19 **GBV impact assessment** in partnership with the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of Serbia, in order to map institutional bottlenecks and to make the prevention and protection from VaW resilient to different crisis situations in the future. Given the anticipated long-term social and economic consequences of the pandemic, the recommendations and findings of the assessment will feed into joint efforts of national partners and UN agencies to eliminate violence against women.

IT IS MY BUSINESS

On the occasion of marking “**16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence**” in 2020, UNDP in Serbia launched for the second time the “**Tiče me se**” (“**It IS my business**”) campaign, to contribute to creating a society that does not tolerate violence against women. The campaign di-

rectly addressed neighbours, who, often enough, are the first ones to witness that a woman is exposed to violence, even before close friends and family members. This year, too, many public figures joined the campaign **#TičeMeSe**. Through a social media [video](#), public figures who joined the campaign appealed to neighbours to react to cases of violence and provide support to women in their surroundings. The video has had over 1 million views so far and continues to be shared through social media. UNDP was also approached by the Belgrade City Organization of Persons with Hearing Impairments, which offered to translate the video into sign language, enabling its wider reach, including among vulnerable groups. To help citizens recognise when a woman in their surroundings is exposed to violence and empower them to react, UNDP prepared an [informative poster](#), which contains essential information on the issue of violence against women, ways of reporting it, and ensuring assistance and support to women and their families. In the upcoming period, the printed poster will be placed in apartment buildings in Belgrade and Novi Sad, and distributed to interested citizens and institutions in other cities throughout Serbia.

REDUCE RISK – IMPROVE SAFETY

The project ‘**Reduce risk – Improve safety – Towards Ending Small and Light Weapons (SALW) Misuse in Domestic Violence Context**’ conducted an **in-depth analysis of the national laws relevant for prevention**

of firearms misuse in domestic violence and explored gaps in their implementation. Based on this analysis, a proposal of legal provisions on how to effectively address the misuse of firearms in domestic violence in the Law on Weapons and accompanying bylaws was developed. Lessons learnt from the in-depth analysis by UNDP Serbia were integrated in the methodology of the regional gender screening of firearms legislations that is conducted by UNDP SEESAC. It also provided a model for similar analyses currently conducted by SEESAC in North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In partnership with the group Journalists against Violence, established by UNDP, gathering media editors and journalists committed to prevention of domestic violence through gender sensitive media reporting, the project conducted a **qualitative analysis of media reporting on firearms misuse and its effects on addressing the issue of gun-culture in Serbia**. The analysis focused on reporting on domestic violence cases committed with firearms and contributes to raising journalists’ awareness. Because of the strong national context of gun-culture, citizens, including media, are not aware of the dangers of firearms possession and its consequences related to domestic violence. The analysis helped trigger greater media interest on SALW control, domestic violence and firearms related issues. Within the project, an **analysis on femicide cases involving firearm misuse in Serbia** (for the period June 2017- June 2020) is currently being finalized, to be used as a basis in advocating for improved risk assessment by case workers and establishment of femi-



It is MY (their) business.



STEREOTIPNE FRAZE ZA OPISIVANJE ZLOUPOTREBE VATRENOG ORUŽJA



45% of media reports include stereotypical phrases for describing firearm misuse.



side prevention monitoring mechanisms. In addition to this, **research on judicial practices and response of the criminal-justice system in response to firearm misuse in the context of domestic violence** will be finalized in the upcoming period. Findings of research and analyses implemented as part of the project will feed into further learning about domestic violence for professionals in the criminal justice system, particularly related to crimes perpetrated through misuse of firearms. The project 'Reduce risk – Improve Safety' is implemented with the financial support of the Federal Foreign Office, Germany and contributes to the implementation of the Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition in the Western Balkans, by 2024.

SUPPORTING WOMEN JOURNALISTS AND OBJECTIVE REPORTING ON VAWG

Continued support was provided for the work of the group **Journalists against Violence**, which now gathers over 60 female journalists and editors. Through **social media**, the group reacted to stereotypical reporting on cases of violence against women and where the journalists' ethics code was not respected. Activities focused especially on **raising awareness on the need for in-depth and objective reporting on firearm misuse to commit violence against women**, based on findings of media analysis, through presentations, social media posts and **blog**. UNDP also called for a greater educational and preventive role of media when it comes to violence against women and domestic violence. The significance of the group's work was also confirmed through the reception of the **Women's Courage Award** of the AVON Company. In addition to this, with increasing gender-based threats aimed at female journalists and other women who speak publicly, the group focused on **raising awareness of the situation concerning the safety of female journalists in offline and online spaces**, and called for the introduction of a gender perspective into measures aimed at improving journalists' safety. In the upcoming period, together with the Journalists against Violence group, UNDP in Serbia will support the **creation of a collection of stock images to encourage responsible media reporting on violence against women** and domestic violence.



60 of women and 45 of men feel less safe with a gun in the house.

For calm streets. For a safe home - To raise awareness about the unacceptability of celebratory gunfire and risks of injury from firearm misuse for women and men, including in the context of domestic and partner relationship violence, UNDP in Serbia implemented a mini social media campaign in the last week of December 2020.

Tek u nešto više od
1/3 slučajeva mediji su izvestili
o mogućim posledicama
zloupotrebe oružja



Only in slightly over 1/3 of cases did media report on possible consequences of firearm misuse.



UNDP PROJECTS WITH A GENDER COMPONENT

UNDP SEESAC - IMPROVING CAPACITIES FOR EVIDENCE COLLECTION AND CONDUCTING CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS IN REPORTED CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Contributing to the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Serbia, UNDP's efforts aim to increase gender responsiveness of SALW control, particularly in the context of violence against women, domestic violence and gender-based violence. Activities of the project **'Advancing the capacities of the Ministry of Interior in the field of custody chain, crime scene investigations and the ballistic laboratory in the field of operations and investigations in trafficking of firearms and firearms criminality'** directly contribute to changing the existing situation where 60% of criminal reports of domestic violence are dismissed by the prosecution due to the lack of evidence and unwillingness of the victims to testify. In order to base the cases on the evidence collected by the police, the project combines capacity building activities and development of relevant procedures.

As part of the project, an expert Analysis and Report in the area of Domestic Violence was developed in the previous period, consisting of four interrelated components: 1) Overview of the procedure of the police related to collection of evidence and analysis of possible gaps and challenges related to domestic violence cases; 2) Examination and analysis of the current practice of the

police in collection of evidence related to domestic violence cases, particularly in the cases in which firearms was present/misused; 3) Interviews with police officers responsible for crime scene investigation; 4) Findings on the shortcomings related to procedures and practice. Upon adoption of the documents in the upcoming period, trainings will be organized for CSI units to improve capacities for collection of evidence and for conducting criminal investigations in reported cases of domestic violence. In parallel, an Instruction will be also developed to specify the situations where forensics teams need to be involved in a crime scene.

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S MSMEs THROUGH DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

Through the **'Beyond Recovery Towards Economic Resilience'** project, UNDP is supporting the Government of the Republic of Serbia in paving the way for digitizing crucial areas arising from the COVID-19 crisis and relevant for COVID-19 recovery. Through this intervention, UNDP Serbia will, through digital means, help the Government design an integrated solution for addressing the incoming complexities and building overall economic resilience. One of the outputs of the project is focused on **supporting women entrepreneurs along hiking trails and engaged in creative industries and tourism sectors to build their capacities and**

develop digital skills enabling them, thus, to meet the needs of modern travelers. This output will contribute to **building local resilience, targeting particularly women, micro and local business owners affected by the crisis, and especially women's entrepreneurship** using the spike in popularity of local tourist destinations. The proposed activities seek to explore the potentials of integrating creative industries, tourism and MSME development at the local level and connect them with hiking, climbing and mountain communities with a potential to develop a larger scale 'Serbia Trails' initiative, inspired by the successful Via Dinarica project implemented by UNDP BiH.

Currently, existing ICT based content for promoting touristic potential and creative industries (various hiking/biking maps, promotional contents) is being identified and assessed, in addition to mapping selected routes and identifying SMEs, touristic offer and creative industry contents along their way. Within the project, activities envisaged for the next period include:

- Supporting SMEs along the identified routes that have touristic, cultural, artistic or patrimonial content with an emphasis on the promotion of cashless payments and e-commerce;
- Provision of training and on-the-job support to women entrepreneurs and women-led SMEs along the identified routes, with special emphasis on skills development for women in the digital economy, use of e-commerce and cashless payments;

- Promotion of touristic, cultural, artistic, or patrimonial content, along the routes, country-wide, through partnership with key tour operators and through other available marketing channels, including an open-data based platform, which seeks to combine the various mapped resources and add new content.

GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE - BEYOND A JUST TRANSITION FOR ALL

As a precondition for gender sensitive evidence-based policy making in the area of climate change, within the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency: **'Establishing Transparency Framework for the Republic of Serbia'** (CBIT project), seven key areas were identified for monitoring across climate change mitigation and adaptation topics. This gender sensitive monitoring framework provides guidelines on how and where to mainstream the gender perspective not only in climate change policies but in other relevant policy areas, as gender equality (as well as climate change) is a cross-sectoral and multi-sectoral issue. To increase gender mainstreaming capacities of experts and officials involved in climate change policy making, information and knowledge sharing events were organized. In August 2020, a **bilateral consultation between Serbia and Kazakhstan** was organized with the support of the Global



UNDP PROJECTS WITH A GENDER COMPONENT



Majority of women work in the **informal economy**, where health insurance is likely to be non-existent or inadequate and income is not secure. So this is not simply a health issue for many women; it goes to the **heart of gender equality**.

PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA
Executive director, UN Women



Photo: UN Women/Kea Taylor

how to make the new economic paradigm operational and sustainable. Through the UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP), the project will contribute to the finalization of Serbia's First Gender Action Plan, including gender-sensitive risk assessments.

NATIONAL IT RETRAINING PROGRAM – COMMUNICATION IS KEY FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN

The national IT retraining program, implemented by UNDP and the Government of Serbia, attracts a significant number of applicants each year – searching for a career change through new skills and participation in Serbia's booming IT sector. The program provides six months of intensive training in a specific programming language, accompanied by relevant soft skill trainings and internships. This program began in 2017 and has so far produced 1250 junior programmers. Each year the program occurred, one of the ongoing issues was the low rate of female applicants which led to women making up between 26-28% of participants annually. However, a detailed impact assessment of the first two phases of the national IT retraining program has demonstrated no correlation between gender and successful employment following the completion of the program. In 2020, the UNDP team decided to redesign the communication campaign and use online media to specifically target women. This commu-

nication campaign targeting women resulted in a significantly higher percentage of female applicants, namely, 47%. What this change in approach and the respected results demonstrate is that communication is the key not only to motivating women to see themselves as successful future programmers, but also to addressing their fears, concerns and questions they might have related to an intensive, career-transforming program.

SUPPORTING INTEGRATION OF RETURNEES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Through the project '**Strengthen National and Local Systems to Support the Effective Socio-economic Integration of Returnees in the Western Balkans**', UNDP IRH and UNDP Offices in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia will work on regional innovative solutions for integrated and **gender-responsive social protection** and care services to promote access to basic services, sustainable jobs and livelihoods for vulnerable groups.

The project started at the beginning of 2021 and will be implemented in the next four years. The overall objective is to contribute to reducing the socio-economic gap between Roma and non-Roma populations and the discrimination of Roma **women, men and children** in the Western Balkans and contribute to support effective reintegration of vulnerable returnees from the EU with particular attention to Roma.

Support Programme for National Communications and Biennial Update Reports (GSP). In January 2021, in collaboration with UN-ECE and UN Women, a webinar on Methods and Tools for Integration of Gender Aspects into Environmental Policies was organized and the developed gender sensitive monitoring framework was further discussed with national partners. Moreover, social and gender aspects were considered during the revision of the Nationally Determined Contribution, where appropriate.

Through the GEF project '**Reducing Community Carbon Footprint by a Circular Economy Approach in the Republic of Serbia**', which is being prepared and is expected to start at the end of 2021, UNDP will assist the Government of Serbia to identify, develop and leverage financing for a change from predominant economic models based on lin-

ear patterns of production, consumption and disposal to models based on principles of circular economy and decarbonization goals. To do so, the project proposes the innovative challenge-based approach – centered around actively engaging citizens, communities and businesses – as a means to jointly identify, develop, finance and implement a portfolio of new, carbon neutral (or close to carbon neutral) pilot/demonstration projects and business ideas based on resources efficiency and circular economy approaches. Systematic incorporation of gender aspects in the circular economy and understanding consumer behaviors, integrating lessons learned from traditional sustainable practices, of which women are often knowledge holders, and leveraging local value chains for sustainability – would not only ensure a "just transition" for all, but would also inform



UNDP PROJECTS WITH A GENDER COMPONENT

The project targets individual returnees, who face multiple vulnerabilities and barriers to integrate into mainstream socio-economic life and considers the distinct needs of men and women while tackling pre-existing gender-based inequalities. Participants in this programme will be offered professional coaching and mentoring, including psycho-social and confidence building support. Individual employability improvement plans will also reflect the distinct needs for mentoring support of women, arising from the disproportional burden which is being shouldered by women in terms of housework, care duties as well and in some cases physical and emotional distress caused by incidents of gender-based violence, both being exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

LOCAL INITIATIVES FOR IMPROVED SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUNG ROMA

In order to support government efforts related to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups in 2021, UNHCR and UNDP continue to implement the intervention **‘Local Initiatives for Improved Social Inclusion of Young Roma,’** which strives to enhance the capacities of young Roma, IDPs, refugees and asylum seekers to proactively contribute to improved living conditions of the representatives of their communities.

The main purpose of the intervention is to involve and build capacities of young women and men from vulnerable groups in building

societal resilience, through networking with local institutions and advocacy campaigns, so that they are better equipped for solving local development issues.

The intervention envisages continuation of activities undertaken in the previous three years and their enhancement, as well as the participation of at least 30% of women in activities regarding the preparation, implementation and monitoring of local mechanisms for social inclusion.

SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK

UNDP has provided support to the National Assembly and local assemblies in the past 8 years, through the **‘Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament’** project, funded by the Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO). The current third phase of the support (2020-2023) focuses on political dialogue, transparency and gender equality.

Women's Parliamentary Network (WPN) conferences were supported in the previous years, in close cooperation with OSCE and other partner organizations engaged with parliamentary development in Serbia. In addition, UNDP supported additional WPN meetings, trainings, workshops, as well as networking of female members of local assemblies. In close cooperation with the Inter-parliamentary Union, **a gender self-assessment of the National Assembly was**

made, with action plan for follow-up activities with the MPs in the new Parliament's Convocation.

UNDP, OSCE and IPU supported the National Assembly in organizing **the first conference of the Women's Parliamentary Network in its new 12th Convocation on January 25, 2021.** Titled “State of Gender Equality in Serbia - Courage is Female”, this was the first activity of new WPNs of National and Provincial assemblies, having in mind that MPs from Vojvodina's Assembly were also participating. Key speakers included female members of Parliament and Government, and the panels discussed the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak impact gender equality and women's rights, as well as the culture of violence and actions for its eradication.

The Conference was chaired by Sandra Božić, MP and WPN co-ordinator, with Ivica Dačić-Speaker of the National Assembly, Prime Minister Ana Brnabić, Brankica Janković-Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Jan Braathu-Head of the OSCE Mission and Francine Pickup, UNDP Resident Representative in Serbia being among the key speakers.

Key conclusions of the Conference and follow-up activities of WPN include **networking of women members of parliaments (National, Provincial and local), gender-based legislative scrutiny, and underlying importance of new Law on Gender Equality** and overall gender rights in Serbia.

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CHILD MARRIAGE

UNICEF has continued to support the Government of Serbia and in collaboration with CSOs and Roma communities to bring an end to harmful traditional child marriage practices in Serbia by 2030, focusing efforts on communities living in Roma settlements. The programme **'Towards the End of Child Marriages in Serbia 2018 – 2020'** aims to leverage and coordinate the existing network of services, resources and trained practitioners addressing issues that cross-cut child marriage and introduce and further develop evidence-based approaches that have been demonstrated internationally and locally to mitigate the factors driving child marriage. As such, it will provide a model of interventions to end child marriage for replication in other municipalities in Serbia.

Within the framework of implementation of the programme UNICEF and implementing partners - Roma women's organizations (RWOs), relevant national and local institutions, CSOs – finalized their work in changing norms and behaviors in the same targeted localities – Belgrade, Novi Bečej and Pirot – with total of 21 Roma communities. Since the launch of this programme in 2018 and with informed adjustments of the intervention due to COVID-19 outbreak, a total of **401 Roma girls, 351 mothers and 94 fathers** have **enhanced their awareness of the harmful effects of child marriage** and the importance of education, reproductive health, and underlying gender dynamics in their social setting. Roma girls and their parents have benefitted from different socializing activities and psychosocial and

socio-educational workshops focusing on information and skills, particularly around life aspirations, reproductive health, gender roles, negotiation and decision-making. In addition, the mentoring support programme was implemented in Belgrade and Novi Bečej by activists of RWC Bibija and Association of Roma Novi Bečej, in cooperation with the Center for Education Policies, supporting **70 Roma girls and young women** in total who have dropped out of **education to finish vocational courses** and raise their education and employment opportunities. **Building capacities of 8 schools** in the vicinity of girls-at-risk-of-child-marriage contributed further to raising awareness of early warning signals for school drop-out and support to girl's education. 175 Roma children have received individualized school dropout prevention plans. The roles of education and social welfare have been continuously **strengthened to identify girls at risk** of child marriage and improve practices to prevent child marriage.

Sustained efforts to strengthen Roma male activism have ensured a more systematic approach to **challenging the attitudes and social norms among Roma males** conducive to the practice of child marriage. Since the beginning of the pilot programme, a total of 173 men and boys from all three project sites have been reached to challenge the stereotype that child marriage constitutes part of Roma identity, to re-examine their attitudes and social norms, to raise awareness of and open up frank and informed discussion on the risks of traditional child/early marriage practices. As part of the fine tuning and finalization of the programme designed for Roma males, structured mentorship was

provided to 10 Roma youth trainers from Belgrade and Pirot to build their facilitation skills and knowledge, so that the programme can be replicated at a later stage. The methodology developed with lessons learned was captured in a **Guide for Working with Roma Men on Child Marriage**.

Efforts aimed at bringing attention to the issue at the national level and garnering decision-makers' commitment to action have resulted in the strengthened advocacy role of the National Coalition to End Child Marriage. More structured cooperation with the media and promotional activities resulted in the first **targeted awareness-raising campaign against child marriage** during the '16 Days of Activism' against violence against women and girls. Policy advocacy work also directly contributed to the recognition of child marriage as a form of violence in the new national Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence 2020–2023 (adopted in 2020). Recent research on the knowledge, attitudes and practices in targeted Roma localities was finalized providing evidence on the impact of the programme. The external evaluation of the 3-year comprehensive programme was initiated in 2020 and will be finalized in 2021 in order to ensure programme accountability, taking stock and evaluating the programme and its results.



Visual materials produced within the campaign '16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence'.



ACTION AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AFFECTING REFUGEE AND MIGRANT WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Direct GBViE prevention and response services for women, girls, and boys:

Within the framework of the implementation of the Phase III of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) funded regional project ‘**Action Against Gender-based Violence Affecting Refugee and Migrant Women and Children**’, UNICEF and implementing partners Info Park and ADRA have continued to ensure increased availability and accessibility of GBViE prevention and response services, as well as gender sensitive child protection, health, psychosocial and safety services for refugee/migrant children, adolescents and women in Serbia, and have served close to 970 persons in the period covered by the report:

- UNICEF continued to support outreach teams and Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) in 4 locations providing specialized psychosocial assistance as well as access to information and case management and referral to further support to refugee women and girls.
- Addressing COVID-19 related challenges, UNICEF and partners have worked on adapting the GBV prevention and response activities to reach target group in conditions of lockdown and restricted movement - switching to remote modalities, introducing hotlines for PSS/counselling, establishing Viber/WhatsApp groups for information dissemination on GBV and gender sensitive COVID-19 infor-

mation. Recognizing the specific vulnerabilities in this context close to 800 dignity/hygiene kits were distributed with key hygiene and NFI items for women, girls and boys in 4 centers.

- Pilot activities to engage fathers and brothers in transformational gender workshops have been continued together with a component addressing sexual violence against boys.
- Advocacy with social workers continued to prioritize the timely identification and proper care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated boys as well as girls, since majority of girls identified as traveling alone disappear very quickly.

GBViE related capacity building and collaboration:

UNICEF together with the Faculty of Political Sciences has developed the course *Protection of Children Affected by Migration* for students and practitioners, with integrated GBV modules. The course includes 8 thematic modules (2 of which related to GBV), and is a compilation of theoretical lectures, peer discussions and internship opportunities in relevant institution/CSO. The course is targeting students of social work and professionals working with children affected by migration. It was piloted in October-December 2020 and will be accredited in 2021 as an elective course at the Faculty.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs have continued to coordinate the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) enhancing coordination among actors working with girls and boys from refugee/migrant populations.

SUPPORTING GENDER-BALANCED PARENTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

The gender prospective is one of the central pillars of the ‘**Playful Parenting Support**’ programme implemented by UNICEF Serbia and national partners with the support of the LEGO Foundation. The gender-balanced parenting support component is an integral part of the capacity building programme intended for the front-line workers operating in the field of the Early Childhood Development. The Playful Parenting Capacity Building programme is designed to sharpen the sensitivity and the skills of professionals for addressing the needs of the caregivers of young children (aged 0-6 yrs.), in a supportive, culturally and diversity sensitive and equitable manner, in their most challenging and rewarding task – parenting. It has been designed also to help introducing positive change in social norms and behaviours with a transgenerational impact on the common or personal understanding of the role of the mother and father within a family and the community environment.

Main prerequisites for successful integration of the Playful Parenting Programme into regular service provision practices and procedures, are reflected in prioritizing the care for the caregiver’s mental health, nurturing responsiveness and playfulness within family and community environment as well as in emphasizing and validating equal capability of mothers and fathers, respecting their cultural or diversity identity and affiliation, for child rearing from the moment of its conception. Those prerequisites, merged

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into one solid puzzle, place mothers, fathers, other caregivers and the family well-being in the spotlight of attention. The implementation of the capacity building programme has started in September this year and has actively involved so far more than 60 professionals and 100 families and sensitized more than 500 professionals from 6 pilot municipalities that would underpin the horizontal expansion of best support models to additional 27 municipalities (planned for the biennium 2022-24).

The Playful Parenting Capacity Building Programme has been designed to help bridge the inequalities still persistent in our country, such as violent disciplining of young children, including physical punishment usage with 1/3 children age between 2 – 4 years and gender unbalanced parenting demonstrable in the fact that 60% of preschool-age children grow up without fathers' involvement in play and learning activities (according to the latest **Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019** conducted by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, with the technical and financial support of UNICEF, the European Union, UNFPA and the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and published on October 2020).

In order to highlight the fact that both mothers and fathers are equally capable to parent from the very first day, the voice of mothers and fathers with the most diverse parenting experience has become intrinsic part of each of the communication activities organized within the Playful Parenting programme. Their voices are jointly reinforcing the value of play in preserving the family well-being and importance of strong sup-

portive orbits around the family in occasion of conferences, webinars, TV shows, TV appearances and similar.

The end of year 2020 was marked by **launching** of the mobile application Halo Beba – *Your Parenting Companion* on the Google Play Store, as an extended channel of the famous Halo Beba phone counselling service established in 2001 with the support of UNICEF. The app has registered more than 5,000 uptakes, and both mothers and fathers have found this application a precious guide through their parenting experience. In fact, the functionality offering both to mothers and fathers the opportunity to rely on the personalized content related to their child and get timely notifications is more than praised. The app has been designed to integrate essential values of the responsive, gender-balanced, playful parenting and to support parents in dealing with parenting concerns and challenges. The launch of the app for iOS devices is being prepared for the oncoming spring.

MATERNAL, CHILD HEALTH AND BREASTFEEDING

Despite the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF in cooperation with national partners, continued to support the implementation of activities related to breastfeeding support and developmental care for newborns. UNICEF supported National Committee for Breastfeeding in developing guidelines for breastfeeding on COVID-19 positive mothers (available at: <https://bit.ly/batuto-dojenju-i-covid19>) and supported media

coverage to spread the information about recommendations.

A very important component of the supported project was to empower fathers to take an active part in caring for a woman during childbirth and a newborn immediately after birth including through support to breastfeeding, whether the child was born healthy or with ill health or prematurely.

Education on breastfeeding support (including the gender balanced dimension), based on WHO, UNICEF training methodology, was conducted for about 150 health workers from maternities around the country. Training program was accredited by National Health Council and due to the complex epidemiological situation was provided through online platform. Since the beginning of the initiative in 2019, 70% of all maternities were engaged covering 95% of all births in Serbia.

Having in mind the special vulnerability of families with small children belonging to the migrant population, a set of educational material in the migrant languages about the health, development and safety of small children (age of 12 to 48 months), breastfeeding during COVID-19 and mental health of mothers after childbirth was developed and distributed.

ELEVATING YOUTH VOICE THROUGH YOUTH ADVISORY BODIES

UNICEF in Serbia formed a Youth Board gathering a group of young people as its advisors, with the aim of sharing their perspectives on



Playful Parenting

Capacity Building Program for ECD Workforce

Caring for the Caregivers

Responsive Parent - Child Interaction

Playful Parent – Child Interaction

Gender-Balanced Parenting

GET IT ON





New Year's Gift to Parents in Serbia: Halo Beba – Your Parenting Companion



← Back

A strong emotional bond with the parents is crucial for child development

Responsive Parenting



A strong emotional bond with the parents is a key factor in the baby's development (but also later in life). When a baby feels safe and loved, he/she is more willing and courageous



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the role of young girls and boys in society, skills development, health, protection, safety and other key issues, advocating for youth rights and encouraging their peers to greater participation.

The Youth Board contributes to the mission of UNICEF, and hopefully to other UN agencies and stakeholders, to make the role of young people in society more represented, recognized and heard, and their needs and recommendations taken into greater account.

So far, UNICEF Youth Board has been involved in consultations and dialogues related to several strategic documents. As a recent example, young Board members shared their perspectives on the Proposal of the Employment Strategy in the Republic of Serbia from 2021 to 2026, within the Public Debate of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs. UNICEF submitted comments on the proposed strategic framework, with views of young people as an integral part.

The members of the Youth Board, 10 girls and 6 boys, consulted their peers on the topic of employment, and based on that, gave suggestions for better functioning of the employment service, youth cooperatives and better connection between education institutions and the business sector. In addition, young people focused on better information and awareness of their peers regarding job offers, administrative and legal frameworks, especially their rights and safety at work, as well as different needs and prospects when it comes to the job search of girls and boys after their studies.

The Youth Board referred to the views of young people collected through the [U-Report platform](#), and pointed out the key ob-

stacles to getting a job - the limited supply of jobs and internships, the lack of necessary education, skills and training, as well as the lack of information about jobs, mentoring and the limitations linked to age or gender. For example, while girls see a limited supply of jobs as the main obstacle, boys are more concerned about the lack of necessary education. Even though the voices of boys and girls are similar when it comes to skills, boys show more interest in digital skills than girls, while girls are more committed to the development of communication skills. UNICEF is focusing on skills that position girls and boys for equal participation and transition to employment, including STEM, participation and creation of digital technologies, social entrepreneurship, and transferable skills such as problem-solving, negotiation, communication.

Engaging youth through Youth Advisory Bodies sends the message that the attitudes of young people should be taken into account to improve the position of youth in every field, including those of girls and boys. The Youth Board is actively involved in the development of youth participation mechanisms, including U-Report platform, the development of volunteer programs, consultations on strategic documents, advocacy initiatives and other activities of UNICEF, but also of other UN agencies and stakeholders in Serbia.

See related links:

<https://serbia.ureport.in/story/743/>

<https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/press-releases/unicef-youth-board-joint-forces-greater-youth-involvement>





Among the **3,123** newly arrived persons observed during November and December 2020, **70%** were men, **17%** were children and only **4%** were women. By the end of the year UNHCR Serbia and its partners managed to screen, profile and assist with various services over **25,000** asylum seekers and other vulnerable displaced persons.

The implementing partners operating in the field, identified, and referred to appropriate services **4,900 persons with specific needs**, including **40** survivors of sexual or gender-based violence (SGBV).

On-line and in-person focus group discussions on Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Prevention to Sexual Gender-based Violence (SGBV), were held with beneficiaries in Asylum Centres and Reception Centre facilities. 15 persons benefitted from these events in November – December 2020 and around 50 during the entire year.

A series of events and activities took place on the occasion of the 16 days of activism against violence campaign where more than 200 asylum seeker and refugee women attended and participated. A webinar *From Awareness to Accountability* aimed at women from the refugee population was also organised with all partners working in the field.

LEGAL AWARENESS AND CONSULTATION

During the two months of the reporting period, the UNHCR partners CRPC, Sigma Plus, HCIT, BCHR, implementing legal activities reaching around 100 women and girls with legal aid, counselling, representation in asylum procedures and follow up totaling up to almost 800 on annual basis.

Specifically, BCHR team continued to support refugees in need of GBV protection who seek and/or get protection in Serbia by providing free legal aid to enable access to territory and procedure, to ensure their rights are respected within the asylum procedure, as well as their meaningful integration and effective access to socio economic rights. The legal aid includes legal counseling and legal representation throughout the asylum procedure and representation in front of domestic higher courts and international bodies.

PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELLING FOR WOMEN REFUGEES

During November – December 2020, two workshops on psychological aid were conducted by PIN and more than 20 sessions for psychological counselling. In addition, UNHCR partners provided mental health and psychosocial support through: individual/group psychological counselling sessions, psychoeducational workshops for UASC, and psychosocial/creative/recreational etc. workshops. Women of all ages among the refugee community benefitted

from immediate first psychological interventions; parenting skills sessions, psychological assessments/reports for asylum procedures and community-based support group meetings and activities. 2020 recorded a total number of more than 1,000 women participating and benefitting from various types of psychosocial activities within and outside asylum centres and reception transit facilities.

BORDER MONITORING AND LEGAL AWARENESS FOR WOMEN REFUGEES AT TRANSIT POINT

The arrival of asylum seekers and refugees was and still is a process closely observed and followed by UNHCR and its partners. Sigma Plus, HCIT, CRPC, INDIGO and BCHR assisted with information and referral to services more than 270 women and 32 girls among the newly arrived persons at the borders for the period of November and December 2020, which resulted on a total of approximate 1500 women and girls assisted during the entire year.

EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The actions and activities undertaken since the beginning of the year continued to be conducted mainly remotely. Sigma Plus, DRC, INDIGO and CRPC proceeded with their interventions through: the online platform for learning the Serbian language for asylum seekers and refugees without an imme-





diate access to a teacher, group activities i.e recreational, educational and sportive activities. During the reporting period, total number of 5 girls (7- 17 years old) of Chinese, Syrian and Iraqi nationality, residents in reception facilities, participated in catch up classes (conducted every day from 9:00-11:00) and creative/educational workshops facilitated by DRC.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IDENTIFICATION AND FOLLOW-UP

In order to provide effective SGBV prevention and response, UNHCR partners implement a set of actions at all levels (individual, community and society level). At an individual level, the activities include providing information on referral services to survivors and those at risk of abuse throughout regular protection monitoring activities and provision of legal aid, as well as conducting special designed workshops with the aim to raise awareness among the female asylum seekers and refugees. Within the reporting period, total number of 9 SGBV cases were identified and followed up by DRC.

On the occasion of the 16 Days of Activism against violence campaign, DRC conducted workshops on women's rights in terms of right to education, right to work, right to family life and protection against violence. The workshops were conducted in Persian and Arabic separately. The gender focal points shared information about legislation in Serbia and they compared it with their experience in the country of origin. They

informed participants about conditions for conclusion of marriage (age limit, marriage should be based on the free will of future spouses, spouses consider to be equal before the law, divorce is allowed, how custody over children is defined, alimony for the children, etc.) One gender focal point from the refugee community wrote an essay on female freedom and independence that she shared with other women. The participants expressed interest to learn more about family law and parental leave. The discussion on shared responsibilities in terms of household work and taking care of children was more than interactive.

PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING OF REFUGEE AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

CRPC and IAN conducted two mental health trainings workshops on Discrimination and Gender Equality as well as importance of cultural mediation. Beneficiaries, women and men from Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Burundi and Sudan exchanged experiences and impressions on the topics and got counselled by both partners.

HCIT provided legal counseling and various socio-cultural activities for around 600 persons (10% of which were women and young girls) accommodated in Subotica, Šid, Loznica, Kikinda and Sombor RTCs. The beneficiaries, mostly from Syria and Afghanistan attended session of information dissemination and had individual counseling by staff.





INTERNATIONAL DAYS

Traditionally marking **16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence**, this year UN Women in Serbia organized an awareness raising campaign **‘You are not alone! Report violence.’** Taking place from 25 November through 10 December, the campaign enjoyed the support of key stakeholders including the Ministry of Interior, the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, the EU Delegation to Serbia and the Norwegian Embassy. Adapting to the pandemic conditions, the campaign took place via traditional and social media, as well as in select public spaces.

As a result of the campaign:

- **5,000 elevators** (or 80% of all) in Belgrade have a campaign poster displayed in them indefinitely;
- **4 million people** were reached via social media, with as many as 30 Serbian celebrities and influencers promoting the campaign;
- Campaign posts are among the **top 10 in the world** with #orangetheworld and #16 days hashtags;
- Campaign video was **broadcast 40** times on national frequency television with estimated **250,000 viewers per broadcast**;
- **16 billboards** in 6 Serbian cities displayed campaign visuals.

PALIĆ PROCESS: 20 YEARS OF COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT



The year 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the Palić process and the establishment of the **Women's Platform for the Development of Serbia**, which gathers women and men from different generations and backgrounds who are actively committed to gender equality, advancement of women's rights and improvement of the position of women in Serbia.

From 26 October through 22 November, 18 consultations and a three-day final Conference *Feminism. Rebellion. Change.* took place gathering over 300 women and men who evaluated the progress made in advancing gender equality from 2016-2020 and set priorities for the next Women's Platform for the Development of Serbia 2021-2025. Identified priorities included work on the rule of law, anti-discrimination, political participa-

tion, institutional mechanisms and support of gender agenda, decentralization, social policy and economy of care, labor market, human security, violence against women, health and sport, education and science, media, culture, generation equality, regional and European cooperation and future of cooperation and partnerships.

UN Women Serbia supported the organization of 15 events and the final Conference, in close cooperation with the Women's Platform and other partner institutions and women's organizations, the EU Delegation, the British Embassy in Belgrade, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway.