



WOMEN AND MEN IN SERBIA: AT A GLANCE

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN SERBIA

As 2020 was dominated by continued COVID-19 pandemic and the election cycle, work on gender equality slowed its pace. However, the dynamic of work on gender equality in the first half of 2021 has already yielded some great results.

The National Strategy for Combating Gender Based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2021-2025) was adopted by the Government on 22 April 2021. Aligned with the Istanbul Convention, CEDAW and provisions of domestic law, the Strategy focuses on prevention, prosecution, protection and support to victims/survivors and witnesses and integrated public policies. Key novelties the Strategy brought include the establishment and improvement of general and specialized support services (SOS helplines, safe houses, free legal aid, etc.) for women survivors of violence and the alignment of domestic legislation with international commitments. The Action Plan for the period 2021-2023 is in the drafting process.

On 20 May 2021, the country's parliament adopted two key laws paving the way for real gender equality in the country: the Law on Gender Equality and the changes to Law on elimination of discrimination. The long-awaited Law on gender equality integrates best practices of the countries in the region and the EU by introducing an institutional framework, such as the national gender machinery at the level of the Deputy Prime Minister, 40% quota for women's participation, establishment of the alimony fund, monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the law and obligations to collect data on unpaid domestic work annually, etc.

On the other hand, The Law on Amendments to the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination ensures further alignment with universal and regional human rights standards, the EU acquis and the Action Plan for Chapters 19 and 23. It includes an updated definition of indirect discrimination; the addition of sex characteristics, sexual harassment, segregation and residential segregation as forms of discrimination; and importantly, an enhanced role for the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality. In addition, the Law introduces an obligation for the Courts to collect data from all proceedings and decisions in cases tackling discrimination (in civil, criminal and misdemeanour proceedings) disaggregated by personal characteristics, areas of social relations, etc.

Furthermore, drafting of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030 has started with the first meeting of the Working Group held in May.

The reporting period has been marked by several high-profile cases of sexual harassment and abuse involving famous public and political figures as alleged perpetrators. The cases raised the whole society against pedophilia and sexual violence and opened a debate on sexual violence against minor girls and women and reasons why no one raised the alarm and broke the silence. 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. Also, strong reactions were immediately sparked across the entire region and initiated an "uprising against sexual violence" - a movement similar to #MeToo.





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. With the aim of eliminating violence against women and building strong links with women’s civil society organizations (CSOs) and other key relevant stakeholders in the country that strive for gender equality and eliminating violence against women, six partner agreements was signed in early May. Five women CSOs and the Commissioner for Protection of Equality (CPE) have received grants to deliver a comprehensive multi-sectoral set of activities aimed at increasing the knowledge of rural women to recognize and report cases of violence against women and girls and/ or gender-based discrimination. Furthermore, a new call for proposals (CFP) was announced in late June to reach more CSOs to advocate and act towards empowering rural women to recognize and report violence and discrimination. As an added value, the project team agreed with SIPRU (Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team) to provide mentoring support to women CSOs interested to submit their proposals for the CFP. The CFP was closed on 30 July.

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 during the state of emergency in 2020. In Serbia, as many as three-quarters of the posts on so-

cial media about violence against women revealed the victim’s identity. Coverage of violence against women on social media in Serbia was extensive in this period. However, explicitly situating violent experiences of women within a broader social context, was rare. Only, few posts included information for women on where to seek help. The analysis also showed that the articles, especially in the tabloids, contain sensationalist or stereotypical expressions referring to violence and women. Terrible, shocking, outrageous and horrific were the most frequently used words to describe the situation of such violence. Additionally, the public on social media was engaging on these posts without prior critical thinking. As a result, the laughing emoticon was used 949 times as a reaction to posts about cases of violence against women. To improve the overall quality of reporting on violence against women and girls, the analysis provides a set of recommendations tackling privacy issue, administration of comments, professionalism, and the like. The analysis is set to serve as a baseline for designing relevant trainings and other future work with the media.

Four two-day trainings for journalists and editors to raise awareness on risks of gender-stereotyping in the media and provide guidance on ethical and safe reporting on VAWG and femicide were held in July throughout Serbia. Journalists and editors from local and national media were particularly introduced to reporting methods, pro-

fessional and ethical reporting standards, approach in communicating with women survivors. In addition, the trainers and guest lecturers presented the concept and elements of gender-based violence, secondary victimization and re-traumatization, legislative framework in the field of prevention and protection from gender-based violence, protocols of relevant authorities, and techniques for coping emotional overwhelm in case the topic of reporting is disturbing. The Guidelines for Media Reporting on Violence against Women were also presented, as well as the results and recommendations of the Analysis of Media Reporting on Violence against Women with a focus on the state of emergency and reporting on social networks. The seminars were very successful, informative, and interactive. Participants actively took part in discussion with trainers and among each other, shared their experiences, issues and doubts. Finally, participants positively evaluated all of the four trainings.

The activities under Youth Against Violence Coalition have been launched. This initiative implies informal gathering of young people, leaders, and influencers from various spheres of public life (singers, actors and actresses, athletes, influencers, etc.) in a coalition, which will raise and keep in focus the issues of sexual violence, abuse, and harassment and creates UN Women agents of change. Andrija Milosevic, a famous Serbian actor, and Olga Danilović, a young promising tennis player have been chosen for the



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RISING FOR
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**"WE ARE FIGHTING FOR OUR RIGHT
TO LIVE IN PEACE AND SECURITY."**

ANASTASIIA YEVA DOMANI
TRANS WOMAN, TRANSGENDER RIGHTS ACTIVIST, UKRAINE

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**"A WORLD WITHOUT VIOLENCE STARTS
WITH OUR VOICE AND ACTION."**

SIA KUKAEWKASEM
SOCIAL WORKER, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR AND ADVOCATE, THAILAND

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Coalition leaders. In that sense, Olga and Andrija had several media appearances on Serbian TV stations with national coverage. Furthermore, the two of them filmed a short video announcing the beginning of the Campaign, which became viral and at this point has more than 200,000 views on Instagram. Moreover, several other celebrities took part in the campaign on social media.

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 include supporting and building capacities of women's civil society organisation to hold governments accountable, advocate for effective implementation, and monitor prevention of and response to violence against women. The Programme has also addressed structural causes of gender inequality – and one of its most pervasive expressions, violence against women – through a transformation of gender discriminatory stereotypes, perceptions and beliefs, and supported providers of specialist support services for victims of all forms of violence to improve their case management practices and make comprehensive, multi-sectoral services for survivors of violence fully available and accessible, especially when it comes to their work with women and girls from minorities and disadvantaged groups.

An Independent Report on the implementation of CEDAW's Concluding Observations for the period 2019-2021 in relation to the Fourth reporting cycle of Serbia, was prepared by **Vojvodina SOS Network** in cooper-

ation with gender experts and other women CSOs and shared with CEDAW Committee on March 29, 2021. The SOS mobile application is an important new mechanism in the prevention of VAW in Serbia and 10 organizations from the Women against Violence Network have participated in the development of the application. Along with the mobile application, all 10 partner organizations use SOS Information System for evidencing cases of violence against women in Serbia. Data and information collected through SOS are used for further analysis and monitoring of cases of violence reported through the mobile application. In total 218 women (75 in first and 143 in second phase), from different groups, participated in the testing of SOS helpline mobile application. All of them had positive reactions to the application. In addition, 14 Roma women used the application in the Roma language successfully. To inform beneficiaries and increase the visibility of the SOS helpline mobile application among the women in the territory of Serbia, an Information campaign has been created and launched through so-called Silent Ambassadors of the SOS mobile application. A letter with information about the SOS mobile application was sent to 312 e-mail addresses of the Silent Ambassadors, as well as via the Viber application to 83 women contacts. To enable the use of the SOS application by all women without exception, communication with all three national companies of mobile operators to provide free Internet for all women users of the SOS mobile application has been initiated and established.

Association Fenomena produced in total 18 info packages and 2 public/media statements to be used further in the campaign for news, public statements, and TV interviews. Topics are related to Covid-19, GB violence, legislation, services and other. Policy and legal research about Covid-19 pandemic, violence against women in Serbia, related backlash, and the response of mandatory institutions was completed and 25 improvement recommendations were produced. The research includes some key reviews such as presentation of the legal protection against domestic violence in Serbia, normative framework for dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, analysis of the gender sensitive policies, prevention system of domestic violence in the Republic of Serbia, but also it tackles some specific topics such as the role of the media in the prevention of domestic violence, raising the awareness of civil servants and public sector employees about the impact of measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 virus on victims of domestic violence, advertising and implementation of programs for perpetrators. The second part of the research focuses only on the action undertaken by the mandatory state bodies, institutions, and civil society organizations in cases of domestic violence during and after the state of emergency related to Covid-19. For example, the proceedings of basic public prosecutor's offices, proceedings of social work centres, protocols of safe houses, and conduct of civil society organizations during the crisis. Some of the main recommendations are:

We are
STRONG



- It is necessary to develop clear instructions and internal procedures at the level of state bodies, institutions, and civil society organizations to work in crisis situations.
- The public needs to be continuously informed about the increased risk of violence against women and girls during a pandemic, as well as other crisis situations, and existing support services.
- Consideration should be given to developing and conducting ongoing training for professionals on the impact of the pandemic and the measures taken on women and girls and their exposure to violence, especially during periods of emergency.
- The state needs to provide adequate funding for all services, including civil society organizations, that provide support services to women victims of domestic violence during a pandemic.

When it comes to mentoring journalists during publishing / broadcasting campaign-related content or other content related to VAW, the selected expert associate (mentor) from group Women Journalists against Violence against Women, followed the publishing of the articles and analysed to which extend the three agreed reporting standards were implemented. The analysis showed that about 90% of monitored articles respected at least three agreed reporting standards.

Licensed SOS service continued to be available 8 hours a day, from 10-18h each working day. Mail consultations are available 24/7, however according to SOS service working protocol, SOS consultants have 8

hours' time limit to respond to calls.

Center for Support of Women continued providing services to women with experience of sexual violence in the Centres for Victims of Sexual Violence (CVSV) in Novi Sad, Kikinda, Zrenjanin and Sremska Mitrovica following the epidemiological situation and protection protocols established in health centres where the CVSVs operate. The RCC at the General Hospital in Sremska Mitrovica is fully functional for service provision. In total 7 counsellors and one service coordinator were hired to provide services, 24/7. The organization of work in all CVSVs has been adjusted to the epidemiological situation so that medical and forensic services have been provided by medical staff, while psycho-social support and psychotherapy, counselling, educational and social services, and legal aid services in the CSW offices in Novi Sad and Kikinda, and Zrenjanin in the ZEC office.

In June 2021, Centre for Support of Women signed a memo of cooperation on providing support and help to women victims of sexual violence with the Centre for Social Work in Novi Sad. With this document, long term, and operational multisector cooperation with social work institutions as well as other organizations and institutions on the territory of APV responsible for dealing with cases of sexual violence was established. Together with previously signed Memorandum of Cooperation with High Prosecutor Office in Novi Sad, adequate help, and support for all victims of sexual violence and ensure participation of women's CSO has been ensured.

General hospitals in Leskovac and Valjevo expressed their interested in continuing cooperation on the establishment of CVSVs in their institutions. In the following period a study visit for medical workers from Leskovac and Valjevo to CVSVs in Novi Sad or Zrenjanin will be organised, to acquaint them with the procedures and necessary steps they must take in future to establish centres.

When it comes to improving assistance to women with disabilities in situation of violence during crisis/ post crisis, **...Out of Circle Vojvodina** prepared additional copies of the brochure on ways to identify and respond to violence against women with disabilities and on existing support services in audio-video format on USB and distributed to sign language interpreters (14) and local authorities as promotional materials (15). Toward improving accessibility and availability of services to women with disabilities, training, webinars, individual sessions, and distribution of educational materials have been organized for service providers in target municipalities. A two-day online training through the ZOOM application "Accessibility of violence protection services for women with disabilities" was organized with the aim of raising awareness of service providers about the importance of ensuring the accessibility of facilities where services are provided as well as the services themselves and teach them what is meant by accessible service for women with different types of disabilities. A total of 24 service providers (17 women and 7 men) participated in the training. Moreover, the webinar for sign language interpreters "Sensitiza-

tion of sign language interpreters for working with women with hearing impairments in a situation of violence" was held in April. A total of 14 female sign language interpreters, from target municipalities, improved knowledge about violence against women with hearing impairments. The participants of the webinar positively evaluated the webinar and pointed out that it is necessary to encourage the national organization of people with hearing impairments to deal with the topic of violence against women with hearing impairments to remove numerous barriers due to which women with hearing impairments do not access protection services.

During May, two webinars were organized for representatives (16 male and 24 female) of 40 institutions signatories to local agreements on dealing with cases of violence against women. Participants were introduced to the guidelines for dealing with cases of violence against women with disabilities to improve their treatment, but also to encourage them to include treatment of women with disabilities in local agreements. To improve dealing with women with disabilities, during this quarter, educational materials have been distributed. A total of 48 posters with printed guidance for dealing with women with disabilities were printed and placed in 48 institutions and a total of 221 service providers in target municipalities received posters and bags with guidance for dealing with women with disabilities. Eight women from target municipalities were empowered through 28 services in total that have been provided through newly established services.



Gender Knowledge Hub, FemPlatz and Women Research Centre finalized and published the research “Attempted femicide and femicide in Serbia: prevention and prosecution”. In addition, project partners completed:

- Changes/additions to the General Protocol of proceedings and cooperation of institutions, bodies, and organizations in situations of domestic and intimate partner violence against women.
- Changes/additions to the Special Protocol for centres for social work and guardianship authorities.
- Changes/additions to the Special Protocol on Police in cases of domestic and intimate partner violence against women.
- Changes/additions to the Special Protocol of the Ministry of Health in treating cases of domestic and intimate partner violence against women.
- Changes/additions to the Special Protocol for the judiciary in cases of domestic and intimate partner violence against women.

Final project conference “Preventing and Eradicating Femicide in Serbia” was held online on 26th April 2021, with total 86 participants (4 men, 82 women) from 48 different institutions or organizations, including professionals from centres for social work, judiciary, police, shelters, gender equality experts, women’s organizations from Serbia, Slovenia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia. Opening remarks were given by Ms Leonetta Pajer, Head of Operations 1 of the Delegation of the EU to the Republic of Serbia, Ms Yolanda Iriarte, Regional program manager/program specialist, EAW, UN

Women, and Ms Milana Rikanovic, Head of UN Women Serbia. Panellists included Prof. Dr Nevena Petrusic, Dr Natalija Zunic, Dr Kosana Beker, Dr Vida Vilic, who presented the research results on femicide/attempted femicide cases in Serbia, inputs for prevention of femicide, model for establishing Femicide Watch in Serbia. The discussion was focused on introduction of femicide definition, proposals for introducing femicide as a separate criminal act, the importance of establishing Femicide Watch, necessity of changing general and special protocols for prevention and proceedings in cases of VAW, the importance of multi-sectoral cooperation in combating VAW. Two advocacy meetings about prospects of establishing Femicide Watch were held: 1) meeting with representatives of UN agencies in Serbia on 14th April (9 participants in total (all women)); 2) meeting with the representatives of the Protector of Citizens and Provincial Protector of Citizens on 15th April 2021 (8 participants in total (1 men, 7 women)).

During the preparation of the Strategy for Prevention and Combating of Gender-based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2021-2025, project team sent a written submission to the line ministry and the Working group for drafting the strategy. The submission highlighted the need for establishing Femicide Watch, incriminating femicide as a separate criminal act, and intensify efforts in the prevention of femicide. Suggestions were inserted in the adopted version of the Strategy, and they will be further elaborated in the Action plan.

Finally, in line with the signed addendum to the donor agreement for Phase II of the

programme “Implementing norms, changing minds” bringing additional funding amount for the programme and extending programme duration until July 2023, three new partner agreements have been signed with women CSOs in the month of June.

Namely, in the next 12 months Vojvodina SOS Network will continue 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. Victimology Society of Serbia will, for 17 months, build capacities of and support to the Groups for Coordination and Cooperation in response to domestic and other forms of gender-based violence, specifically in developing individual safety plans for survivors of violence, while Roma Women Centre BIBIJA will be providing with economic reintegration opportunities for Roma women, survivors of violence for 15 months.

In the coming period two more partners will be engaged to:

- 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.
- Increasing the professional capacities and number of professional staff engaged in free legal aid service provision to address the needs of at least 200 women.

**“IT IS TIME FOR
WOMEN TO STOP
BEING POLITELY
ANGRY.”**

- LEYMAH GBOWEE



Support to Priority Actions for
Gender Equality in Serbia



GENDER RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE

March 2021 marked a beginning of the second phase of a three-year EU funded project “**Support to Priority Actions for Gender Equality in Serbia, phase II**” (GEF II project) that supports the Government of the Republic of Serbia in effective implementation of the EU Gender Equality Acquis, adoption and implementation of the new legal and strategic framework for Gender Equality, Gender Equality mechanisms on national and local levels, and gender mainstreaming in policies and EU funds programming, implementation and monitoring. Furthermore, the project will advance the position of women and will support local communities in fulfilling their commitments on gender equality. UN Women Office in Serbia implements this project, in close cooperation with the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, the Ministry of European Integration, the EU Delegation in Serbia and other partner institutions as well as with women’s civil society organizations.

GEF II project focuses its activities around **three main results**: 1) The National Gender Machinery system has knowledge and capacities for accomplishment of gender equality and women’s empowerment standards and principles; 2) Civil servants responsible for EU funds programming and monitoring strengthened their knowledge and skills to comply with principles of non-discrimination, gender equality and accessibility; 3) Women’s CSOs are supported to influence development and implementation of gender sensitive policies and pro-

grammes and to promote the culture of tolerance, equality and non-discrimination.

UN Women supported the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue in the development of **three laws in the area of human and women’s rights**: the Law on Gender Equality, the Law on Same Sex Partnerships, and the Law Amending the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination. New Law on Gender Equality as well as the Law Amending the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination have been adopted by the National Assembly on 20 May 2021. **The Law on Gender Equality** should enable further promotion of gender equality, systematic regulation and strengthening of institutional mechanisms for gender equality. It introduces measures to achieve gender equality in different fields of socio-economic development (e.g. labour, employment and self-employment, social and health care, education etc.), as well as specifying the obligations of public authorities, employers and other social partners regarding planning and implementation of measures for the promotion of gender equality.

Support for drafting the **new National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021 – 2030 and corresponding Action plan** is on-going. Apart from providing expert assistance, UN Women supports the Coordination Body for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue to organize and implement the discussion between different stakeholders, including academia, civil society on priority areas of future Strategy and NAP for GE. Strategy is being prepared following the main international, EU and national strategic documents,

commitments and reports, as well as based on the results of the Evaluation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020 and Ex-ante assessment prepared based on the Law on the Planning System. Adoption of the new Strategy by the Government is expected by the end of 2021.

As part of the efforts to support gender responsive policy planning, UN Women supported the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia to finalize, design and print the publication “**Women and Man in Serbia**” available [here](#) in Serbian and English. This is the sixth publication in a row aimed to offer policy makers sex-disaggregated data to be taken into as reference when designing and implementing policies. Publication is offering data for the following areas: Population, Health, Social protection, Education and science, Employment, Wages and pensions, Living standard, Time-use, Judiciary, Decision making, and International indices. In addition, draft **Gender Equality Index for Serbia** has been developed jointly with the Statistical Office, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, and the Coordination Body for Gender Equality. It is currently being reviewed by the European Institute for Gender Equality.

Following the new Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III) adopted by the EU at the end of 2020 and to provide systemic basis for gender responsive EU support to Serbia, **Gender Country Profile** has been developed. The document is providing a comprehensive and structured gender analysis in the six intervention areas identified in the GAP III: Ensuring

freedom from all forms of gender-based violence, Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights, Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women, Promoting equal participation and leadership, Integrating the women, peace and security agenda, and Climate change and environment and Digitalisation. It has been developed through a participative process with national institutions, international organizations, EU Member States, and civil society organizations.

As part of the support for **gender mainstreaming of EU funded actions**, expert assistance has been provided to the Ministry of European Integration for gender mainstreaming of Multi-Annual Operational Programmes (2021 - 2027) for Cross-Border Cooperation between Serbia-Bosnia and Hercegovina, Serbia-North Macedonia, and Serbia-Montenegro.

First **Call for Proposals for CSOs with the aim to support women economic empowerment and improvement of the women position in the labour market** has been organized and implemented. The following organizations were selected to implement projects from July 2021 until July 2022: *Association for Development of Creativity, Ethno Network, Handicrafts of Luznica W&C, Association of citizens Laris and Zrenjanin Educational Center*. Around 1000 women belonging to multi-discriminated groups, living in several regions across Serbia, will be empowered and their employability shall be increased through various skills and knowledge development programmes, events and campaigns, purchase of equipment and improvements of already



established businesses. In addition, context of COVID-19 has been taken into consideration therefore all organizations have planned activities to alleviate the effects of pandemic and enhance economic status of women. The projects will also contribute to raising of public awareness about the rights of women (rural women, women 45+ etc.) and the importance of their work for community development, through organization of workshops, creation of promotional materials and TV shows, organization of special events and creation of conditions for dialogue in their communities.

Finally, as part of the awareness raising and media campaign activities, **exhibition “When the World Stopped, They Didn’t”** has been opened on 8th March to mark International Women’s Day. This is a multimedia exhibition of art photographs of ten women from all over Serbia who bravely and selflessly took the lead during the highest peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Exhibition has been opened organized in the French Cultural Center by the UN Women with the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, Ministry of European Integration, EU Delegation to Serbia and the French Embassy in Belgrade. The exhibition is still active as many cities and municipalities raised the interest to host in. So far, it has been organized in Novi Sad, Niš, Kruševac, Vladičin Han while 15 more local self-governments showed the interest in hosting the exhibition in their municipalities.

GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

UN Women continued to support GRB implementation and institutionalization at all governmental levels, under the regional GRB Project ‘**Transformative Financing for Gender Equality towards more Transparent, Inclusive and Accountable Governance in the Western Balkans**’. The Ministry of Finance included three new budget users in GRB implementation, as defined in the Annual Plan for GRB Introduction and GRB Budget Instructions, totaling to 48 institutions that are obliged to further improve or introduce GRB in their 2022 budgets. In partnership with the Ministry of Finance and the Provincial Secretariat of Finance, UN Women increased capacities for GRB implementation of more than 80 civil servants employed in institutions at national and provincial levels. In addition to learning how to integrate gender perspective in budget planning, execution and reporting, these participants learned about new obligations deriving from the newly adopted Gender Equality Law and how these can be implemented through GRB.

In a bid to further institutionalize GRB, UN Women supported the National Academy for Public Administration in developing GRB content of their online training modules, that will be available to all civil servants by the end of the year, in line with their adopted Annual Programme.

To contribute to the development of gender-sensitive measures to address COVID-19 crises, UN Women organized consultations with the relevant actors in the fields of economy and culture and discussed best ways forward for securing that the specific women’s needs are encompassed by Government’s responses. The basis for consultation was UN Women’s gender analysis of COVID-19-related budget reallocations that occurred during 2020. All participants agreed that women’s groups, experts and organizations should be included more in consultations aimed at development of various measures as a response to crises, in order to secure that their specific position is taken into consideration.

As part of the efforts towards improvement of the position of rural women through GRB implementation, UN Women also organized an online consultation with representatives of women CSOs focusing on economic empowerment of rural women. The findings and recommendations resulting from consultations will be shared with key stakeholders at national and provincial level, in an effort to ensure that budgeted measures and programmes correspond with the needs of rural women.

Having in mind that UN Women will provide tailored GRB technical assistance to 10 LSGUs in 2022-2024, UN women initiated GRB mapping and assessment to ensure that appropriate LSGUs are selected, while securing proportional geographic coverage,

Since 1995, the number of women parliamentarians around the world has more than doubled to

25%.

Source: Gender Equality: Women’s Rights in Review 25 years after Beijing



Globally, **43% of women and 53% of men** believe men make better political leaders than women.

Source: Gender Equality: Women’s Rights in Review 25 years after Beijing



Globally, just over

1 in 4

managers, across all sectors, are women.

Source: Gender Equality: Women’s Rights in Review 25 years after Beijing





ethnic minority representation, and considering closely demonstrated interest in and commitment to gender equality. In order to provide the best possible expertise to LS-GUs and expand the pool of experts providing support to GRB, UN Women organized an online regional GRB Training of Trainers for over 40 participants, including several experts from Serbia.

UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

UN Women supported the Republic of Serbia's participation at the 65th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women from 15-26 March. The Deputy Prime Minister, President of Coordination Body for Gender Equality and Minister of Mining and Energy, Prof. dr Zorana Mihajlovic participated at a dialogue themed "Building back better: Women's participation and leadership in COVID-19 response and recovery" sharing national and thematic challenges and achievements on GEWE and related to post-pandemic "new normal" that includes women in decision-making. UN Women also supported the Side-Event to the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, co-organized by ODIHR, on Violence against Women in Politics, Experiences and Ways Forward for Women Leaders where

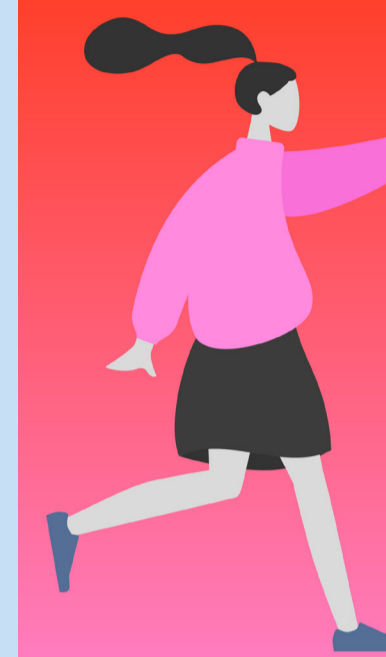
Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, Republic of Serbia, Gordana Comic, was a key speaker.

GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM

The 2021 Generation Equality Forum, an initiative of UN Women, with the governments of Mexico and France, and in partnership with civil society and youth was held in Mexico City from 29-31 March 2021 and culminated in Paris from 30 June-2 July 2021. It is the largest global feminist gathering since 1995, that brought together governments, corporations and changemakers from all over the world. The Forum kicked off a 5-year action journey to achieve irreversible progress towards gender equality through a series of concrete, ambitious and transformative actions, including \$40 Billion in financial commitments. This journey is built around the Global Acceleration Plan, a global roadmap for gender equality that aims to achieve the of the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Plan engages governments, civil society, private sector, entrepreneurs, trade unions, artists, academia and social influencers to drive urgent action and accountability on gender equality and women empowerment.

UN Women supported participation Founder and Director of Mikser Festival, Maja Vidakovic Lalic at the GEF in Mexico, at a Thematic Dialogue "Feminism in the Context of the Environmental Crisis and the Climate Emergency" within the Crises and Hope panel, focusing on the linkages between climate change, climate and urban environment, gender sensitive, climate-smart urban policies.

UN Women supported the participation of the DPM, President of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality and Minister of Energy and Mining and Prof. dr Zorana Mihajlovic at the opening and the panels of GEF in Paris in person. In her message Mihajlovic stated that "Serbia is recognized as a country that has taken serious steps towards achieving gender equality - from the establishment of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, adoption of laws, dedication to the fight against violence against women and girls, to being the first non-EU country to introduce a Gender Equality Index, gender responsive budgeting and gender sensitive language. We have done a lot, but there is still a lot of work ahead, because as long as there are women or girls experiencing discrimination or violence, we have not achieved our goal". At GEF in Paris Serbia applied as a commitment maker with policy commitments to Action Coalition on Women's Leadership and Women's Movement.



67%
of climate related
decision-making roles
are occupied by men.

Note: Under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement
Source: Gender Equality: Women's Rights in Review 25 years after Beijing



In only 14 countries do
women account for

50%

or more of government
cabinet members.



Source: Gender Equality: Women's Rights in Review 25 years after Beijing



Between 1992 and
2018, only **13%** of
negotiators, **3%** of
mediators and **4%**
of signatories in
major peace processes
were women.



Source: Gender Equality: Women's Rights in Review 25 years after Beijing





RESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE TOWARDS HEALTH

In March 2021, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, and UNFPA, with the support of the Institute for the Advancement of Education, launched the initiative for improving interdisciplinary competence of students' Responsible Attitude towards Health. The overall aim of the proposed intervention is to improve the availability and quality of life-skill school education for students of primary and secondary schools in order to increase their competencies to protect their health and safety. The first stage of intervention, implemented this year, focused on increasing the capacity of teachers and professional associates to implement various activities which will help students to increase competencies for a healthy lifestyle, prevention of gender-based violence and promotion of gender equality, prevention of possible use of psychoactive substances, and preserving sexual and reproductive health. After the first phase of training, professional associates from 1500 schools who completed extensive online education, will transfer their knowledge to teachers in their local community supporting them to include all listed topics in preparation of their classes and educational activities. This enhanced program towards achieving a responsible attitude towards health will be implemented through age-appropriate lectures, workshop work, and extracurricular activities.

TURNING THE TIDE? HOW THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CREATED UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DEPOPULATING COUNTRIES OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

In April 2021, the UNFPA Regional Office together with the UNFPA CO Serbia organized the launch event of the UNFPA EECA Regional Brief titled "Turning the Tide?" on the unexpected opportunities that reverse migration triggered by COVID-19 opened up for South-East European countries confronted by depopulation. This event aimed to gather leading experts, activists, researchers, journalists, and national and international development partners, as well as the report's authors, to discuss how these new opportunities can be harnessed.

The Report explores stories of return to Serbia and Bulgaria, and in particular a story of Dragana Tomic who returned to village Vrmdza when the COVID 19 pandemic started. She founded an NGO, the Centre for Socially Responsible Entrepreneurship (CDOP) and then Vrmdza's Rural Hub with the main goal to "empower villages through social economy and entrepreneurship," by supporting women entrepreneurs in particular.

During the event, participants raised many questions and agreed to conduct advocacy towards national and local governments and the EU, to start implementing recommendations from the report. What remains unknown is how many of these people will remain in their home countries after the pandemic has passed. Serbia has a great opportunity to entice them to stay,

rather than move abroad again. UNFPA has already started to work on the development of some rural areas in Serbia through the innovative gender-transformative project "Dad's Hub on the Wheels" which is explained in the following section.

MY BODY IS MY OWN: REGIONAL LAUNCH OF UNFPA STATE OF WORLD POPULATION REPORT

UNFPA Eastern Europe & Central Asia organized a panel discussion on key findings of the UNFPA State of World Population Report 2021, "My Body is My Own," on claiming the right to bodily autonomy and self-determination in April 2021. For the first time, a United Nations report focuses on bodily autonomy: the power and agency to make choices about your body, without fear of violence or having someone else decide for you. This lack of bodily autonomy has massive implications beyond the profound harms to individual women and girls: potentially depressing economic productivity, undercutting skills, and resulting in extra costs to health care and judicial systems. Nearly half of women in 57 developing countries are denied the right to decide whether to have sex with their partners, use contraception or seek health care, according to UNFPA's 2021 flagship *State of World Population* report.

The panelists from the region and Serbia shared individual stories and experiences, with a focus on generating support for action to end violations of bodily autonomy and integrity. This fruitful discussion was

followed by media, experts, nongovernmental and governmental organizations that consider this report as a crucial document that provides insight into the most important gender questions in our society.

You can access the UNFPA State of World Population report, **My body is my own: Claiming the right to autonomy and self-determination**, here: unfpa.org/SOWP-2021

PRESENTATION OF THE SPECIAL REPORT ON DISCRIMINATION OF THE OLDER PERSONS

Commissioner for Protection of Equality Brankica Jankovic with the support of UNFPA in Serbia prepared the Special Report on Discrimination against Older Persons that was discussed in the National Parliament on 14th May 2021. The report shows the current situation and challenges of reaching equality for older persons, as well as possible ways to overcome them. A special part of the report is dedicated to creating proactive policies that should ensure social security, inclusion, and prevention of discrimination and violence against older persons, especially towards older women.

At the beginning of the meeting, the participants were addressed by the President of the National Assembly Ivica Dacic, the Head of the EU Delegation Sam Fabrizi, the UN Permanent Coordinator Francoise Jacob, and a video message from UNFPA Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia Alana Armitage was broadcast. After the presentation of the most important data from the Special Report, two pan-



els composed of high-level Government representatives and the most prominent civil sector organization, were held dedicated to the intersectoral cooperation of state bodies and the role of the civil sector in improving the position of older persons. The last part of the gathering was dedicated to good practice examples and the launch of the UNFPA campaign and the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality “Looking to the Future”.

LAUNCH OF DAD'S HUB AT MIKSER FESTIVAL

Gender transformative programmes are crucial in UNFPA work. Dad's Hub concept was launched at the end of May 2021 at the regional Mikser festival that gathers stakeholders on the national and international level from the government and nongovernmental community. Mikser Association and UNFPA presented Dad's Hub as a virtual and interactive space that aims at empowering fathers and men in general, to think in a comprehensive manner about the relation between the established gender hierarchies and norms, current parenthood models, and gender inequality. After positive feedback to the *Dad's Hub*, a decision was made to complement the initial project with *Dad's Hub on the Wheels*. During 2021, Dad's Hub will travel to four distinctive places in terms of population dynamics and development – two locations will be in rural and remote, and two in urban areas. Gender-transforma-

tive workshops will be conducted in online and onsite space and will create a community of men, fathers who will try to dismantle gender patterns in their municipalities.

GIRLS ADVANCE LAB

UNFPA BiH, in cooperation with UNFPA Serbia, Mozaik Foundation, Lonac Pro, Violeta d.o.o. and Belgrade Center for Human Rights is implementing GIRLSADVANCE LAB (GAL), a new joint venture in BiH and Serbia. The purpose of this Laboratory has been to empower young girls from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia to face the challenges they perceive as the most important. GIRLSADVANCE LAB is structured as a mentoring system that develops and implements innovative ideas that focus on specific problems in girls' surroundings and offers unique solutions to address them. The call for girls' ideas was launched in 2020 and 72 applications were received from both countries. Through multiple mentoring and participatory phases, in total 5 girls project initiatives from Serbia were selected for implementation, namely: ArtKrug (ArtCircle) from Jagodina, Tu sam (I'm Here) from Novi Pazar, Ženeracija Stres (Generation Stress – the word “ženeracija” is a blend of “žene” (women) and “generacija” (generation)), Korak napred (A Step Forward) and Biram život (I Choose Life) from Belgrade. The implementation of the selected ideas started in June 2021 and is facilitated by Youth Program of the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights.

CAMPAIGN #NaTebiJe (It's On You) FOR BUILDING TRUST AMONG YOUTH ON IMMUNIZATION PROCESS AGAINST COVID VIRUS

The Youth Program of the Belgrade Center for Human Rights with the Institute for Health Protection of Students, Belgrade, and UNFPA, supported by Government's and civil society representatives partners, started a campaign that aims at building trust among youth on immunization against covid-19 under the slogan “#NaTebiJe” (It's On You) in June 2021.

The campaign aims to build young people's trust in the recommendations of experts on immunizations and epidemiological measures and change the prevailing narrative that young people are to blame for spreading the infection. Recent research showed that almost 60% of young people aged 18 to 29 believe that the risk of the vaccine is equal to or higher than the risk of coronavirus.¹ For that very reason, the campaign “#NaTebiJe” puts young people in focus, gives them space to ask questions, to express their doubts, and offers experts' answers and evidence-based, yet very clear and concrete information about adverse effects, level of protection, influence on reproductive health, fertility and pregnancy, among other issues, emphasizing the individual contribution young people can make in managing the epidemic. The campaign consists of videos, illustrations, visuals, online and live conversations, and encouraging discussion on social media.



¹ Data are taken from recently published research conducted by the company Ipsos and the Laboratory for Research of Individual Differences at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade.



SOCIAL DIALOGUE ON THE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

On 10th June 2021, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights in coordination with UNFPA in Serbia organized a social dialogue with governmental institutions and civil society organizations to discuss the development of the social protection system. The Minister of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue Gordana Comic and the Minister of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs prof. Dr. Darija Kisić Tepavčević emphasized that both Ministries and the Government of Serbia want to listen to the experts from civil society and find the best possible solutions for creating a just social protection system. The social dialogue had a discussion on two important strategic documents that are being drafted - the Strategy on Social Protection and the Strategy for Deinstitutionalization and Development of Community Social Protection Services for the period 2021-2026 year, with accompanying action plans, and on drafting amendments to the Law on Social Protection.

Demographic changes were part of the conversation as they represent one of the most important factors affecting the social protection system and its sustainability. Increasing the share of the older persons will increase the need for health services, formal and informal care and pensions, and all

participants agreed that special attention must be given to the older persons in rural and remote areas. Special attention was given to older women who are at high risk of gender-based violence and elder abuse. At the end of the meeting, binding actions from the social dialogue on the social protection system in the Republic of Serbia were formulated, agreed upon by civil society organizations and respective Ministries.

VOICING THE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS ISSUES

In anticipation of the final event of the Global Forum for Generation Equality, CSO Association for Sexual and Reproductive Health of Serbia, in partnership with the Embassy of France and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Serbia organized a panel discussion on consent and the right to bodily autonomy under the title “Voicing the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Issues” in June 2021. National web dialogue served as a unique opportunity for civil society, leading experts, activists, researchers, journalists, and national and international development partners and UN agencies, to discuss ways in which sexual and reproductive health and rights can be improved in Serbia especially in relation to consent and bodily autonomy.

One of the crucial preconditions for equality is bodily autonomy or the possibility to act on motives, reasons, or values that are one’s own. Still, a significant percentage of women and girls in Serbia do not have full bodily autonomy as indicated by the latest Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 6 and measured by the capacity to make a decision about using health care, use of contraception, and decision about sexual intercourse. Usage of modern contraception remains low with only 21% of women in Serbia using effective contraception, and only 7% of women in Roma settlements. Overall, 34 percent of young women aged 15–19 years living in Roma settlements are currently married or in a union, but this rises to 41 percent of those from the poorest households. For that very reason these discussions are important to raise awareness and create joint advocacy campaigns for voicing sexual and reproductive health issues. All participants agreed that they will use the Global Forum for Generation Equality to voice out these messages.

UNFPA CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EU SUPPORT TO SOCIAL HOUSING AND ACTIVE INCLUSION PROGRAMME (SHAI)

Recent researches have confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic and measures introduced to curb the virus spread, have disproportionately affected older generations and vulnerable groups. The effects of the COVID-19 crisis are complex and multiple: disturbing the economy and affecting particularly those at-risk-of-poverty populations, such as Roma, disadvantaged women, victims of domestic violence, persons with disabilities, and others who live in inadequate housing conditions. Until next September, UNFPA will contribute to the SHAI project funded by the European Union and implemented by UNOPS. The focus of our work will be on the most vulnerable populations, older persons, and Roma women. Health-related issues and access to services during and the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis are core topics of the project. Within the project, we will explore attitudes on sexual and gender-based violence older Roma women have. Also, we will map available services and housing solutions for those exposed to GBV, and their specific needs and access issues in the time of COVID-19.



MINISTRIES OF DEFENCE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS COMMITTED TO INCREASE CAPACITIES TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE

UNDP SEESAC continued to support the governments of the region in integrating gender perspective in the Security Sector Reform and upholding Women, Peace and Security Agenda through the regional networks fostering gender-related knowledge exchange.

The 13th Regional meeting of Gender Equality Mechanisms in the Ministries of Defence (MoDs) and Armed Forces (AFs) of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Republic of Serbia was organized in a hybrid format in April 2021, bringing together 31 representatives of gender equality mechanisms, decision-makers, and commanding officers to share information and exchange knowledge as well as plan joint activities for integrating gender perspective in defence policies. Eight representatives of MoD Serbia and Serbian Armed Forces participated in the 13th Regional Meeting. In addition to the regional knowledge exchange, the regional meeting enabled participants to learn about the position of women in the Norwegian Army and the experiences of the MoD of Norway in monitoring career progression in the military from the gender perspective, measures for the prevention of gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse, and the internal complaints mechanisms addressing these issues. Ms. Kjersti Cristina Klæboe, Director General, Head of the Department of Personnel Policy, Competence,

and Joint Legal Services at Royal Norwegian Ministry of Defense, emphasized that combating gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse is important from multiple perspectives. If not addressed properly, it undermines the core values of the AFs and diminishes its operational effectiveness.

Recognizing the importance of increasing their capacities to effectively address gender-based discrimination, four MoDs, with SEESAC technical support, jointly developed the ***Regional Manual on Combating Gender-Based Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Abuse***, expected to be published by the end of 2021. The regional approach has proven useful to the MoDs in updating the existing, as well as adopting new policies to address gender-based discrimination, harassment and abuse. In parallel, MoDs implement national level-activities to improve their practices in recognizing and addressing the issues related to gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse in the military. The activities include training for various levels of personnel, as well as developing new standard operating procedures and codes of conduct. MoD of the Republic of Serbia took an active part in these activities both at the regional and the national level.

At the request of the MoD SEESAC provided support in organizing a series of seminars to strengthen the capacity of the MoD

of Serbia internal complaints mechanism – the Persons of Trust. Interactive seminars enabled participants to learn about gender stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment and ways to create a discrimination-free workplace. Additionally, they learned about protection mechanisms, laws and regulations, and how to mediate discrimination-related disputes effectively. Finally, Persons of Trust discussed discrimination cases and tested their understanding and perception of their role in preventing and addressing gender-based discrimination in the workplace. In total, 74 Persons of Trust were trained at the seminars.

All four MoDs actively participated cross-regional data collection for the **second regional study** on *The Position of Women in the Armed Forces in the Western Balkans*, which was completed at the end of May. This Study represents a comprehensive analysis of the status of women in uniform with recommendations for improving the position of women in AFs and, for the first time, allows for comparison of progress compared to the seminal Regional study published by SEESAC in 2014. MoD of the Republic of Serbia actively participated in the regional Working Group in charge of conducting the regional Study.

The Study provided the set of recommendations based on the key findings:

- Significant increase of women in uni-

form was registered between 2014 and 2020, however women remain underrepresented in high-ranked positions, with the largest portion of women in the ground/ land branches of AFs;

- Participation of women in the international peacekeeping missions is on the increase, however women remain underrepresented;
- Young women are interested in the military career and the number of female applicants is on the increase, however improvements are needed related to gender sensitive recruitment and retention policies, as well as more decisive action to curb gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse.

In order to support development of evidence based, gender sensitive policies in human resources departments of the MoDs, the ***Regional Online Youth Perception Research*** was conceptualized and conducted, focusing on the values and attitudes of youth while considering future profession with specific emphasis on gender related aspects and the career in the military in the Western Balkans. Field work was completed and draft analysis of both the country-level and the regional data prepared. The findings will be used to develop four policy papers with recommendations to be reviewed and adopted by the four MoDs, with the ultimate aim to tailor human resource policies to improve attracting and retaining diverse





workforce. The results of the findings will be published by the end of 2021.

SEESAC initiated activities related to the inclusion of **gender in the military education and training – the first meeting of the regional WG, in which MOD Serbia is taking a significant role**, was held in April 2021. Five

representatives of the MoD Serbia are nominated to the regional WG, from the University of Defence, Military Academy and MoD Department of Education. The WG agreed to initiate the Regional baseline study on mainstreaming gender perspective in education and training in the defence sectors of the

four WB countries. The Baseline will include good practice examples and recommendations for mainstreaming gender in military education. This work represents a major contribution to the overall sustainability of activities focusing on gender equality in the military.



WESTERN BALKANS LEGISLATIVE GENDER ANALYSIS: MAKING SURE SMALL ARMS CONTROL WORKS FOR BOTH WOMEN AND MEN

In cooperation with institutions in the region, UNDP SEESAC is conducting a comprehensive analysis of SALW control frameworks to support governments to fully integrate the gender perspective into relevant legislation and policies.

Extensive evidence provided by UNDP SEESAC has thoroughly documented highly gendered aspects of small arms. In South East Europe, men make up for 97.2 % of firearms owners and commit 98.4 % of firearm-related criminal offenses. They also account for the majority of victims of firearm-related homicides and injuries (83.8 %). Women, on the other hand, own only 2.8 % of firearms, hardly ever misuse them but are disproportionately represented among the victims at 16.2 %. The patterns of women's victimization are primarily related to domestic violence. 61% of all killed women were killed by a family member, compared to 12.4% of all killed men. 43.5% of all women killed by an intimate partner in SEE were killed with firearms. According to SEESAC's Armed Violence Monitoring Platform, 23 women were killed

by their family members in 2020; 37.4% of reported domestic violence incidents which involved firearms had a lethal outcome. The misuse of firearms in domestic violence is more lethal than any other type of incident, and it is almost four times more deadly than in criminal incidents.

In order to effectively address specific challenges that women and men face with respect to small arms, relevant legislation and policies must fully take into account the role that gender perspective plays in shaping and understanding various aspects of small arms use, misuse. The Roadmap for Sustainable SALW Control in the Western Balkans, adopted in 2018, places specific importance on the advancement of gender equality and calls for the full integration of gender and age concerns into small arm control policies.

Since then, the authorities in the Western Balkans have made significant progress in integrating the gender perspective into SALW control policies. This has been particularly the case with strategies and

action plans for the implementation of the Roadmap, which foresee an ambitious set of measures to address linkages between firearms and domestic violence; respond to gendered aspects of firearm demand, use and misuse – including linkages between specific forms of masculinity and firearms; increase participation and representation of women in arms control and improve gender-sensitive data collection practices.

In order to facilitate the implementation of these commitments and support the authorities to further mainstream gender perspective, UNDP SEESAC, in close cooperation with the SALW Commissions, is currently conducting a comprehensive gender analysis of legislation relevant for arms control. The analysis aims to assess gender responsiveness of legislation and policies, map gaps in legislative response, and provide recommendations for authorities on how to advance such responsiveness. The analysis also integrates the lessons learned of the exercise conducted by UNDP Serbia on the misuse of firearms in the con-

text of domestic violence.

The gender analysis of legislation is an integral part of SEESAC's ongoing support to the region through EU Council Decision 2018/1788, on harmonization of arms-control legislation with the EU regulatory framework and other related international obligations across the region.

The activity represents a continuation of long-term support in this area provided to the region with substantial EU funding, including research and development of practical gender mainstreaming tools, implementation of thorough SALW Surveys that enabled collection and analysis of sex and age disaggregated data and development of a wide range of gender-specific knowledge products. In addition, implementation of the gender coach programme, with the heads of SALW Commissions and Gender and SALW training for members of the SALW Commissions significantly contributed to their increased competencies and commitment to integrating the gender perspective into small arms control.



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

The **Swiss PRO technical assistance** for improving gender equality at local level, facilitated the (re)establishment of 30 gender equality mechanisms (GEMs), adoption of the EU Charter in 28 LGs, and 30 LGs have developed new local action plans with clearly defined indicators which will enable the monitoring and evaluation of the GE LAP activities.

Local Women Councillors' Networks have been formally established in 21 LGs, and wider networks have been created in order to prepare local action plans, initiatives and more active action of women councillors' networks in the process of advocating for gender equality matters in local assemblies. The established LWPNs whose members have been strengthened within the capacity building activities have been already launching initiatives at the local and inter-municipal level. For example, LWCN Knić initiated the organization of an SOS telephone line for psychological assistance to victims of domestic violence at the level of Šumadija District, in cooperation with the competent services and the Centre for Social Work.

So far, **4,289 beneficiaries (2,686 women)** have benefited directly through the implementation of 28 projects of the local GEMs. Improving provision of health services and achieving equal access to health services for all citizens, especially elderly women in eight local communities in LG Knić has so far resulted in provision of 3,199 medical examinations. Advocating for the equal importance of the participation of both parents/

guardians in raising the child and promoting breastfeeding was contributed by the installation of four benches intended for diaper change and breastfeeding in the central and most populated parts of LG Sokobanja. Support to women farmers in LG Blace in increasing production and their economic empowerment was enabled through the training programme and awarding of greenhouses for 15 women. Enhancing the economic empowerment of 20 unemployed rural women with multi-layered vulnerability in LG Golubac was enabled through a training programme and placing their products on the first exhibition held. Procurement of the gynecological chair adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities in LG Svrlijig will improve the quality of services and provide easier access for women with disabilities, pregnant women and the elderly during gynecological examinations. A total of 56 (39 women) decision makers, leaders, councilors, presidents of parliamentary working bodies, and representatives of citizens' associations in LG Dimitrovgrad participated in informative and educational workshops aimed at strengthening management structures for advocating and promoting gender equality and the application of gender principles in everyday work.

The Swiss PRO support provided through **68 social inclusion projects** contributed to the improvement of the socio-economic situation of 10,338 direct beneficiaries out of which 5,609 vulnerable women. Moreover, out of the current number of female beneficiaries, a total of 5,462 women got better access to health, social protection and education services or completed the process of accessing their rights and entitlements.





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

After three years long implementation and delivery of 341 projects, **over 85,000 women directly benefited** from the realisation of the EU PRO Programme which aimed to contribute to overall economic and social growth in 99 local self-governments in the regions of Šumadija and Western Serbia and Southern and Eastern Serbia.

Under the activity for enhancing social cohesion in multi-ethnic municipalities, **seven women associations, one women agricultural cooperative and one social enterprise that employ marginalised women were supported** in Prijepolje, Priboj, Vranje, Bor, Lebane, Tutin, Babušnica and Dimitrovgrad. Through this activity **more than 160 women acquired various knowledge and skills** for women's rights advocacy, to engage in agricultural and organic production, in tourism business, souvenir production and different crafts, while some projects provided equipment to women to generate income, start their own businesses or be more competitive in the labor market. The most notable results included establishment of a social enterprise for the provision of printing services that gathers women with disabilities in Vranje, while two women of Roma nationality from Bujanovac found employment after

undergoing vocational training. In Bor, the association for the promotion of local tourism and traditional food in the rural areas was established by two women, as well as a web platform for online sales of the products manufactured by rural women, which also started placing their products through the local tourist organisations. Additionally, production of dried forest fruits and vegetables was initiated in Lebane through empowerment of social enterprise for food processing that provides employment to the women from marginalised groups. In Priboj ten agricultural holdings, mostly women-owned, expanded food production through equipment provision.

Twelve women and girls from national minorities groups in Vranje and Tutin are empowered to engage in social activism. They are strengthened for advocacy regarding rights of women from minority groups and gender equality and they are actively involved in the process which can contribute to better social inclusion.

Within the efforts to enhance competitiveness and sustainability of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSEs), the EU PRO supported two Calls for MSEs to procure equipment and introduce related services through a grant scheme. **Out of 203 supported enterprises, 33.5% percent (68 enterprises) are women-owned.** Furthermore, this activity resulted in creation of new jobs, where

43% of new employees (244 out of 565) are women. The activity for supporting Business Support Organisations among other achievements, ensured provision of **support to ten female-owned enterprises** in Pirot through business promotion and provision of technical support to expand into the new markets.

Under the infrastructure sector, three projects contributed directly to gender equality. Reconstruction of two outdoor sports fields contributed to **enhanced sports activities** for three **female** basketball **teams** and one volleyball team in Kragujevac and Bato ina. Reconstruction of the Cultural Centre in Rekovac, created conditions for organisation of economic, cultural and tourist activities which include **promotion of women entrepreneurship** and their typical local products.

VOICE



STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCE OF VAW PROTECTION IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

Building on data from institutions as well as civil society organizations, UNDP has completed 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 provide recommendations for making the prevention and protection from VaW resilient to different crisis situations in the future. The as-

essment provides an overview of challenges encountered in institutional response to GBV during the state of emergency introduced in Serbia due to the Covid-19 outbreak, as well as examples of good practice that emerged during that period and that could continue to be implemented to ensure that protection from GBV is not hindered by future crises. The assessment informed the new Strategy for

Prevention and Combating of Gender-based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period 2021-2025 and contributes to the implementation of recommendations related to the protection and support to women victims of gender-based and domestic violence during crisis situations. One of the recommendations states that an in-depth assessment should be developed on the re-

sponse of all stakeholders in the system of protection from domestic violence during the state of emergency (police, public prosecutor's offices, courts, health-care and social welfare institutions), with the aim of determining obstacles and challenges in adjusting the method of work and achievement of cooperation in emergency situations, including cooperation with women's organizations.



INTEGRATED RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SERBIA III

Continuing previous efforts of UN agencies and the Government of Serbia, and supported by the Government of Sweden, the "Integrated response to violence against women and girls in Serbia III" project works to build a society where violence is effectively sanctioned, women and children exposed to violence are protected and receive timely support, and citizens are informed about the unacceptability of violence.

In the period from February to end of July 2021, participating agencies UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP, in cooperation with national partners, CSOs and the media, contributed to comprehensive response to VAWG:

- The Strategy for Prevention and Combating of Gender-based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period 2021-2025 was adopted. The document was developed through a widely participa-

tive process, partly supported through the "Integrated Response" joint project.

- Eight women's organizations specializing in provision of anonymous SOS support to women survivors of violence were provided grants to ensure sustainability of their services, their broader accessibility and adjustment to circumstances related to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The group Journalists against Violence was supported to improve knowledge on rape and sexual violence against women and girls, with a view of professional and ethical media reporting on these issues. With the project's support, the group is developing guidelines for the safety of journalists from gender-based violence.
- The open call An Image for Change was implemented, to collect illustrations and photos contributing to ethical media reporting on the problem of violence

against women. The open call was organized as part of an initiative to create a free stock of photos and illustrations that depict the problem of VAWG in an objective, ethical and responsible way.

- Research on capacity assessment of healthcare workers in response to GBV and mapping of key factors that contribute to the successful response of health care institutions to GBV, obstacles faced and possible solutions, has been initiated. The research will also focus on supervisory support to health care workers and on response in regular conditions, as well as those during the Covid-19 crisis. In addition to this, the development of an on-line training program for health-care workers and managers on addressing needs of GBV survivors, has been initiated to provide a long-term national training resource.

- Through online trainings, 30 young women - youth office activists in Belgrade, Subotica and Niš improved their skills to become community leaders in promoting gender equality and implementing activities to prevent gender-based violence. Also, analysis on correlation between gender stereotypes and gender-based violence in online space among youth in Serbia has been initiated.

- The National Coalition to End Child Marriage prepared recommendations for normative changes for a better prevention of child marriages. The proposed amendments of the Family Law, Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Criminal Law are related to the full ban on child-marriage, support to child victims and sanctioning of perpetrators. In addition to this, the Coalition launched in July an awareness raising campaign



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“A Childhood, not Marriage” to inform about the negative consequences of child marriage.

- Bearing in mind anticipated amendments of the Family Law banning physical disciplining of children, an awareness raising campaign is being prepared to address parents and increase their knowledge on positive disciplining. In addition to this, training is being developed for social protection, education and healthcare professionals who will support parents in positive parenting and early development.
- Ex post analysis of the provincial Programme on the protection of women from domestic and intimate partner violence and other forms of gender-based vio-

lence (the Provincial Programme) 2015 – 2020 has been initiated and Methodology developed. This is a first step in the process of drafting a new provincial program. Activities at provincial level will be implemented in cooperation with Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality with the intention to contribute to effective delivery of integrated services for women and girls survivors of violence by capacitated general and specialist service providers in Vojvodina.

- Activities to support the work of the three existing Centres for Survivors of Sexual Violence (in Novi Sad, Zrenjanin and Kikinda) have been initiated. The aim is to improve psychosocial support for vic-

tims of sexual violence, support healthcare workers and ensure sustainability of the Centres.

“IT IS MY BUSINESS” GOES LOCAL - FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS THAT DON'T TURN A BLIND EYE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Building managers in Belgrade, Niš and Novi Sad joined the „Tiče me se“ (It IS my business) campaign of UNDP in Serbia, dedicated to raising community awareness and supporting women exposed to domestic or partner-relationship violence. In the apartment buildings they are in charge of, building managers placed posters, informing cit-

izens of the problem of violence, as well as how to report it. Neighbours are often the first to learn about women experiencing violence, even before close friends or family members.

Posters were prepared by UNDP, in cooperation with UNICEF, UN Women and UNFPA, to help citizens to recognize violence against women in their environment and encourage them to respond to it.

Efforts to encourage tenants to be more open about the topic of violence against women and show support to those directly affected by it, have been captured in a video, bearing the strong message - A better, violence-free neighbourhood starts with each of us!



REDUCE RISK – INCREASE SAFETY

The project “Reduce risk – Increase safety – Towards Ending Small and Light Weapons (SALW) Misuse in Domestic Violence Context” supported the development of research on the correlation of the problem of violence against women and firearms misuse:

- Small Arms and Light Weapons, Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence – Analysis of the Regulatory Framework and Practice
- Domestic Violence and Firearms Misuse – A study on the practice of institutions of the criminal justice system in re-

sponse to domestic violence committed through misuse

- Analysis of Cases of Femicide Committed with Firearms

In cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, 186 participants from the prosecution, courts, police, social welfare centers and civil society organizations in Novi Sad, Belgrade, Kragujevac and Niš, were informed and increased knowledge on correlations between firearms misuse and domestic violence, as well as risks and consequences of firearms misuse in the context of domestic and intimate partner violence.

Building on research findings, a social media awareness raising campaign was

implemented to mark the National Remembrance Day for Women Victims of Violence - 18 May. Highlighting the risk of fatal outcome in cases of firearm misuse in the context of domestic violence, the challenges to reporting and providing support to victims of firearm-enabled domestic violence, and the impact of such violence on the community, the activity led to significant media coverage of the topic and media interest in firearms misuse and domestic violence.

To support protection from firearms misuse in a domestic violence context and contribute to the effective implementation of regulations related to firearms control, the project also developed:

- **Analysis of administrative data collection practices on the misuse of SALW** in domestic and intimate partner violence,
- Proposal of **guidance for preventing firearm misuse** and improving concrete response to misuse of SALW in a domestic violence context, **during the procedures of approval/denial of firearms licenses,**
- **Guidelines** for prosecutors, judges and multi-agency groups for cooperation and coordination **on the collection of evidence and ensuring adequate protection and prosecution of cases of domestic violence,** with particular focus on domestic violence committed with firearms.



Measures against Covid-19 limiting organization of physical meetings and events, including regular training activities of professionals, lead to a rise in the need for possibilities of e-learning. This is why UNDP in Serbia is supporting the Judicial Academy in developing a digital learning platform and the **first trainings to be available through the platform are those dealing with response to domestic violence**. These will be available from autumn to police officers and the judicial sector, as well as healthcare, social welfare and other professionals throughout Serbia participating in the implementation of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence. Digital training on response of the police in cases of domestic violence will also be available to all police officers through the Ministry of Interior's e-classroom platform. The digital trainings cover the topics of recognition of domestic violence, risk assessment, skills of proving this criminal act, especially focusing on cases involving firearms misuse, as a high-risk factor for a fatal outcome in the context of domestic violence.

With no centralized records on cases of domestic violence in Serbia, it is impossible to follow a case through the system from the moment it is reported to its final outcome. In addition to this, each responsible institution keeps its own records and there is no electronic exchange of data relevant for case management. To support the creation of such records, **UNDP has developed a Study to provide a basis for building unified, centralized records on reported and processed cases of domestic violence**, aiming to ensure effective protection of

survivors, as well as information needed for statistical processing.

The project Reduce risk – Increase 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.

JOURNALISTS AGAINST VIOLENCE – SPREADING THE WORD TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The group established by UNDP and Fund B92 in 2017, that started out with 3 initial members, now gathers around 90 women journalists, editors, online media professionals dedicated to improving reporting on violence against women. The development and significance of the group was presented through a [video program](#) aired live on Zoom and social media, to viewers from Serbia, but also neighbouring countries, where the group's work inspired similar networking of women journalists.

Through social media, Journalists against violence continued reacting against stereotypical and unethical media reporting on violence against women, highlighting main principles from their [guidelines](#).

After completing the **analysis of media reporting on violence against women in 2020**, group members have continued analysing media reports in 2021. In addition to this, with the support of UNDP, the Jour-

nalists against violence group is working on the **development of their website** dedicated to responsible media reporting on violence against women and safety of women journalists, **as well as a training programme for media professionals** on ethical and educational media reporting on violence. With increasing gender-based threats aimed at female journalists and women who speak publicly, the group is also **developing guidelines for the safety of female journalists** and has called for the introduction of a gender perspective into assessing journalists' safety and measures aimed at improving the situation.

LET'S STEP UP EFFORTS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

On International Women's Day, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia recalled that, despite significant progress in socio-economic development, no country has yet achieved full gender equality. It reminded that the current COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to increasing gender inequality and has additionally aggravated the position of women, in view of the impacts on the economic situation, increased unpaid work at home and higher risk of domestic violence.

In a [video](#) created to mark March 8, UNDP in Serbia presented its support to efforts leading to equal participation of women in all spheres of life, the opportunity for their voice to be heard, and their perspective be taken into account in decision making. As the better position of women also contrib-





utes to overall social development, UNDP in Serbia stressed the importance of increased efforts leading to better and more equitable life for all, through improving the legislative framework, implementing specific policies and measures, active promotion of networking and activism and a strong response against harmful prejudices.

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S MSMES THROUGH DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

Through the “Beyond recovery towards economic resilience” project, UNDP’s is supporting the Government of the Republic of Serbia in paving the way for digitizing crucial areas arising from the COVID19 crisis and relevant for COVID 19 recovery. The project seeks to promote family friendly hiking trails among Serbian citizens, as well as to advance local creative industries products and services, accommodation offer, food safety and food diversity offer in line with various dietary requirements, additional and innovative ecotourism activities suitable for various age groups and levels of abilities, having in mind the needs and requests of both domestic and foreign visitors. 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.

Results to date include :

- **developed roadmap and concept for a digital open-data based platform for promoting hiking** trails and associated touristic, hospitality and creative industry contents. The platform concept was developed in line with design thinking methodology, using a gender-sensitive approach;
- **30 trails in the pilot region of Valjevo mountains recorded and digitalized**, with associated attributes and points of interests (natural and cultural features, ecotourism, hospitality and creative industry businesses/contents, etc);
- **Conducted mapping of MSMEs and women entrepreneurs and women-owned and -led MSMEs** with touristic offer and creative industry contents along the trails in the region of Valjevo mountains and conducted assessment of their needs;
- **Partnered with CSO Ethno network for providing support and training of women entrepreneurs** in creative industries in the region of Valjevo mountains.

WOMEN MAYORS NETWORKING TO ACHIEVE FULL GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIO- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

On the initiative of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALS) and with the support of UNDP, **22 Women Mayors and Presidents of Municipalities** in Serbia **signed in March the Char-**

ter of Women’s Solidarity, committing that they will, irrespective of their political party affiliation, cooperate and act jointly in order to achieve full gender equality in Serbia

The signing of the Charter was the first step in the **establishment of the Network of Women Mayors and Presidents of Municipalities in Serbia** that should assist in transferring the good practice of representation of women in the political life from national level to the local level, thus contributing to achieving gender equality. The purpose of this gathering was to enable networking and exchange of experiences among women appointed to the positions of mayors and presidents of municipalities in order to agree on future steps in their cooperation and identify the type of support that is most needed in order for them to overcome challenges in their local communities

As part of UNDP’s commitment to assist the Network’s activities by advancing knowledge and skills and supporting communication among members, **new e-trainings developed within the project Civil Service Training for the 21st Century**, were first presented in June to members of the Network of Women Mayors and Presidents of Municipalities in Serbia, with the aim to improve the quality of life of all citizens in local communities and support women heading local self-governments. Over 25 trainings, covering a broad range of subjects, are available to civil servants at the online learning platform of the National Academy of Public Administration. These digital tools for professional development will help Network

members manage their local communities successfully, from improved planning and provision of public services, to better monitoring of achieved results.

DIALOGUE FOR THE FUTURE

In scope of the regional Dialogue for the Future project, UNDP Serbia conducted several **dialogue and advocacy activities** in cooperation with the Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, in order **to present recommendations for improving the position of women in Serbia**. The Dialogue meeting held in April 2021 in Belgrade included representatives of public institutions and brought concrete discussion on next steps. As confirmed by the Minister, recommendations presented by the representatives of the project will be included in the following strategic documents:

1. National Strategy for Gender Equality,
2. Anti-discrimination Strategy,
3. National Sustainable Development Strategy.

Project participants were invited to contribute directly during the process of finalization of the above-mentioned draft strategies and participate in working groups related to these documents. As agreed with the Minister, all meeting participants will closely monitor the process together and meet again in one year and evaluate achievements against the presented targets.



SUPPORTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF WOMEN AND MEN RETURNEES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Through the regional project (Serbia, Macedonia and Albania) “*Strengthen national and local systems to support the effective socio-economic integration of returnees in the Western Balkans*”, together with the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, UNDP in Serbia is working to reduce the socio-economic gap between Roma and non-Roma populations and the discrimination of Roma women, men and children, contributing to the effective reintegration of vulnerable returnees from the EU. The project targets individual returnees who face multiple vulnerabilities and barriers to integrate into the mainstream socio-economic life, including those related to prevailing gender norms and stereotypes.

Based on various data assessment, three municipalities have been selected in Serbia for the implementation of project activities: Novi Sad, Valjevo and Bujanovac. This way,

different geographical regions are covered with different levels of development and population size, and two local governments with more returnees based on readmission agreements, also significant administrative capacity to manage demanding projects, as well as an active, primarily Roma, CSO sector. The process also includes formal cooperation with municipalities and stakeholders regarding development of local integration strategies, support for multiple cooperation platforms, capacity building for employment and service availability.

IMPROVED SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUNG ROMA WOMEN AND MEN, REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The main goal of the joint UNDP and UNHCR project “*Local Initiatives for Improved Social Inclusion of Youth from vulnerable groups*” is to continue efforts in training and employing young women and men in local-self-governments and/or other governmental institutions or NGOs at local level to achieve representation in national and local institutions, build local capacities and commitment to social inclusion.

During the last four years, 65 young Roma women (30% of the total number) and men, as UN Volunteers, have gained experience working in the local self-government and institutions, and 26 have been given jobs after completing their volunteering service. Also, the institutions at the local level have been empowered to hire representatives of the Roma community to work on social inclusion and improve vulnerable groups’ living conditions.

- 🔍 a woman's place is ×
- 🔍 a woman's place is **in leadership**
 - 🔍 a woman's place is **in the lab**
 - 🔍 a woman's place is **in space**
 - 🔍 a woman's place is **in politics**
 - 🔍 a woman's place is **in academics**
 - 🔍 a woman's place is **in engineering**
 - 🔍 a woman's place is **in peacekeeping**
 - 🔍 a woman's place is **EVERYWHERE**

- 🔍 Women's rights are ×
- 🔍 Women's rights are **human rights.**
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CHILD MARRIAGE

National Coalition to End Child Marriage (NCECM), an advocacy platform coordinated by the Coordination Body for Gender Equality and Roma NGO Ternipe, and supported by **SIDA**, implemented in partnership with UNICEF as part of the Joint project “**Integrated Response to Violence Against Women and Girls in Serbia III**”, continued to facilitate synergetic efforts of numerous local, national, government and non-government actors, private sector and media, and promote good practice examples. After NCECM was particularly instrumental in bringing the issue of child marriage into the public sphere in 2019/2020, in 2021 it was successful in articulating the necessary legislative changes that would ensure better protection of victims of child marriage, and in launching the accompanying campaign “A Childhood, not Marriage”. The NCECM was functional through its two newly designated subgroups: a) the subgroup for normative system changes and b) the subgroup for media communication on child marriage and visibility.

The subgroup for improvement of normative framework, which includes 25 member organizations, has come up with the **Initiative for amendments of three key laws - Family Law, Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence** and magnitude of child marriages in Serbia and to inform the public on the NCECM efforts to end **Criminal Law**. The proposed amendments are related to the full ban on child-marriage, support to child victims and sanctioning of perpetrators. More specifically, the proposed amendments of the Family Law introduce the ban

on child marriage under 18 years with no exception, in alignment with the Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence (2020-2023), but also adding more amendments to the Family Law that would provide additional protection to victims of child marriage. The proposed amendments of the Criminal Code are also supported because early marriage in its nature is a crime and should be recognized as criminal offence. When it comes to the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, proposed changes aim to ensure that underage formal marriage and informal unions are recognized as domestic violence.

They were officially presented beginning of July at the 6th high-level meeting of the NCECM chaired by Zorana Mihajlovic, Deputy Prime Minister and the President of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality. The subgroup for media and visibility developed a media plan including the development of the campaign “A Childhood, not Marriage” that was launched beginning of July 2021. The goal of the campaign is to raise awareness about the phenomenon child marriage. The aim of the campaign is also to educate parents and community members, especially Roma leaders, on the importance of prevention of child and early marriages. The visuals of the campaign were designed including the NCECM logo, statements for the media and institutions, four videos and a human-interest story (available at <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/stories/childhood-not-marriage>). The campaign was also supported by the media workers, with an aim to ensure increased reporting on child marriage using different channels

and media formats so that the topic is not only visible to the public, but also communicated with dignity, in an ethical way and by presenting the broader context of the phenomenon.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN EMERGENCIES (GBVIE): ADDRESSING GBV AFFECTING REFUGEE AND MIGRANT WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Direct GBVIE prevention and response services for women, girls, and boys

Within its regional response to the **needs of the refugee/migrant population** UNICEF, together with its implementing partners Info Park and ADRA, has continued to ensure increased availability and accessibility of **GBVIE prevention and response services**, as well as gender sensitive child protection, psychosocial and safety services for refugee/migrant children, adolescents and women in Serbia.

Regional program “*Action Against Gender-based Violence Affecting Refugee and Migrant Women and Children*” is implemented with the financial support of the United States Government and during this reporting period it has **served 637 persons, including 408 women, 130 girls, 64 boys and 35 men**. The support services were provided through **Women and Girls Safe Spaces and outreach teams in 4 locations** (2 locations in Belgrade, Sid, Vranje), including specialized psychosocial assistance as well as access to information and case management and referral to further support to refugee

women and girls – additionally adapted due to COVID-19. Additionally, recognizing the specific vulnerabilities in this context, **887 dignity/hygiene kits** were distributed with key hygiene and NFI items for women, girls and boys in 4 centres.

GBVIE related capacity building and collaboration

Following the continued investments in strengthening capacities of professionals working in systems of social welfare, health, education, migration management for understanding migration context and how it affects protection of children on the move - UNICEF has opted to institutionalize these efforts and encore them in the regular education process in Serbia. In partnership with the University of Belgrade/Faculty of Political Sciences UNICEF has thus **developed the course *Protection of children affected by migration with integrated GBV modules***, with support from the United States Government – a pioneer initiative of this kind in the region. The course was designed and piloted in 2020, while in 2021 it was further developed and accredited as a regular course at the Faculty with support from Health Programme of the European Union, with the textbook being currently finalized. This multidisciplinary course is accessible to both students of social work and professionals working in humanitarian context including within child protection or migration management sector.

UNICEF and Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, with support of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants, continue to coordinate

the **Child Protection Sub-Working Group (CPWG)** with close to 30 regular members – representatives of civil sector organisations and institutions working with refugee/migrant children. The CPWG is aimed at enhancing coordination among actors working with girls and boys from refugee/migrant populations and developing joint solutions to the gaps identified and in reporting period it has been focused on ensuring adequate care arrangement and access to services in COVID-19 context.

To support further **mainstreaming of disability and gender in the humanitarian response** UNICEF has worked on designing a tool to improve identification, consultations with and response to needs of girls, boys and young people with disabilities and their families. Together with UNHCR in May UNICEF organized a workshop to launch the tool and initiate a debate on need and possibility for stronger inclusion of disability and gender considerations for partners of both agencies.

CO-PARENTING AND GENDER-BALANCED PARENTAL BEHAVIOURS AND PRACTICES IN CHILD-REARING

A cross-sectoral **programme “Scaling-Up Playful Parenting”**, implemented by UNICEF and the Government of Serbia with the support of LEGO Foundation, is empowering more and more ECD frontline workers in health, social welfare, preschool education services for fostering **playful, responsive** and **gender-balanced parenting prac-**

tices in child-rearing. During the COVID-19 crisis, when the caregivers of young children needed the support more than ever, almost 400 home visiting nurses, nurses and teachers in preschool education, social workers, fostering and adoption advisors have learned approaches that nurture parental strengths, so that, mothers and fathers, and other primary caregivers could be empowered to engage in quality care for a child development, starting from the very first day of child’s life – and even before, from the moment of conception.

So far, as many as 10,000 families of newborn and young children (in 20% fathers were also engaged), including those in vulnerable situations, were addressed with improved work practices of professionals from three different support sectors, both through **home visits** and **remote counseling**. Thanks to the new professional focus in ECD service provision, mothers and fathers have the chance to strengthen and develop skills for quality interactions with their children through simple **daily routines that integrate play**, to sharpen their sensitivity towards their children’s cues and needs – their responsiveness, to share responsibilities, better cope with parental stress as well as to nurture quality family relations and social interactions. According to the global evidences, these essential skills of the primary caregiver are at the same time essential prerequisites in ensuring the best start for every child.

This June the **Parenting Month** was marked, celebrating parental strengths, after such a demanding year conditioned by the pandemic. This is the third year in a row

that UNICEF globally celebrates the Parenting Month with families and community actors in order to place parents and caregivers in the spotlight. This year, Serbia has emphasized that caring for children starts with caring for parents through a national campaign entitled **“Medals to Parents”**. Parents empowered through the Programme **“Scaling-Up Playful Parenting”** took this inspiring occasion to share their first experiences and learnings among their peer communities. A human-interest story **“Supported Parents Help Children Thrive”** gives beautiful insights on how small changes in supporting parenting can result in a valuable improvements in family wellbeing and child outcomes.

In order to assess key parenting knowledge, attitude, practices (KAP) for nurturing care in early childhood development, determinants affecting parenting behaviour, the UNICEF Playful Parenting Programme has launched this June a **KAP Study on Nurturing Care and Playful Parenting Practices** in six pilot locations in cooperation with the Institute of Psychology of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Serbia. The findings of the study will underpin a complex process of cross-sectoral improvement of policy and institutional-level support measures, protocols and practices that address the most important inequalities and the needs of families of children aged 0 to 3 yrs. The findings of the study will help trigger positive change in parental and community behaviours and promote playful, gender balanced parenting support programmes conceived also as a means of prevention of harsh parenting, child neglect and violent disciplining.

Considering that social norms, attitudes, beliefs are largely influenced by transgenerational determinants, during the Parenting Month, a three-week **U-Report Survey on gender roles in parenting** was organized. It reached 1400 young people aged 15 to 30 years with the aim to understand if youth and adolescents are questioning gender-related stereotypes that might influence perceptions on parental roles and practices of future mothers and fathers. It also aimed to make a positive influence of the youth awareness and perceptions in this regard. The survey revealed that most respondents believe (87%) that perceptions on parental roles and parental behaviours in child-rearing are formed in early childhood when children learn about the world from their parents and close environment. Young people are of the opinion that both mothers and fathers are equally capable to perform parental duties and that their engagement in the care for the child development from the very first day is equally important. Moreover, the respondents were able to project themselves in both parenting roles (of the mother and of the father) with equal participation in the decision-making process and in taking all of the responsibilities connected with quality child-care. They believe that insufficient participation of the father has a negative impact on development of the child and his/her life skills, as well as on success, self-respect and independence in the adult age. Regardless of declared gender, most respondents shared rather similar opinion on the roles of mothers and fathers in child-rearing. An overview of the results collected through this survey is available

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on the [U-Report Serbia Platform](#) in Serbian and [U-Report Serbia Platform](#) in English.

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION STARTS WITH A FAMILY-CENTRED APPROACH

The empowerment of parents and caregivers, both mothers and fathers, is increasingly being recognized as a critical component of care interventions for children with developmental risks, delays and disabilities. In 5 locations (Belgrade-Rakovica, Kragujevac, Nis, Leskovac, Sremska Mitrovica) where **Early Childhood Interventions** have been piloted by UNICEF, OSF, Belgrade Psychological Centre and relevant institutions from health, pre-school education and social welfare, there is increased attention to fathers' engagement. In the **novel Caregiver Skills Training (CST) Programme** for families of children with developmental disorders or delays (developed by the World Health Organization with international organization Autism Speaks) within 98 families, again 20% included fathers. The CST Programme was designed to adopt a **family-centred approach** that nourishes active participation of both mothers and fathers in support sessions organized by ECD professionals through home visits or remote counselling. The CST Programme is being piloted so far in 3 cities in Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis), with the aim to institutionalize the Programme as a regular service in institutions dealing with early childhood interventions and developmental delays in children and to be cost-free for the families.

MATERNAL, CHILD HEALTH AND BREASTFEEDING – MAINTAINING THE CONTINUITY OF CARE IN FOCUS

The COVID-19 crisis has imposed many new challenges to families with new-borns but also to the health care in support of these families. To overcome this, the continuity of programmes focusing on improvement of breastfeeding support and developmental care for new-borns has been strengthened by UNICEF Serbia and relevant national partners who, introduced on-line learning modalities. During 2021, 8 online trainings on breastfeeding support were organized for around 400 health practitioners from 90 health institutions based on a methodology of a 20-hour course developed by the World Health Organization and UNICEF to foster breastfeeding support practices including empowering of fathers to take an active role in this process. Additionally, the survey done by the Institute of Public Health on the influence of COVID19 on the implementation of the breastfeeding support practices in maternities implemented in 52 out of 58 maternity wards indicated that only in one third of maternities National recommendations were respected fully, in the same maternities breastfeeding of COVID 19 + mothers was fully supported while generally skin-to-skin was reduced, support to mother in breastfeeding (initiation and maintenance) was seen as challenge and in half of the maternities formula was used more frequently. In 60% of maternities, COVID 19 + mothers were separated from their children. Based on that National

Committee for Breastfeeding additionally reinforced the guidelines and emphasized them through online learning sessions and media appearances. The [National guidelines for the use of drugs during breastfeeding](#) were finalized and made available online.

LEARNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY – ACCESS TO DIGITAL EDUCATION – SERBIA

The programme “Learning for the 21st Century”, funded by National Cash Register (NCR) and implemented by UNICEF Serbia, in partnership with SEE ICT and Cabinet of the Minister of Innovation and Technological Development, was designed to support children and adolescents thrive in the 21st century by providing critical digital literacy and ICT skills, such as basic knowledge on programming and algorithmic thinking. Since September 2019, the programme supported 1,454 adolescents in 20 municipalities. As unequal access to education limits girls' opportunities to build their foundational and transferable skills and girls and young women experience a series of gendered risks and barriers that limit their opportunities, the programme focused on girls and young people from vulnerable backgrounds: 61 per cent of the total participants were girls, and 63 per cent of total participants were from underprivileged groups.

In general, youth and adolescents in Serbia do not have enough opportunities to gain skills needed for 21st century society

and the job market. This is recognized both by the authorities and by the young people themselves. The National Youth Strategy (2015 - 2025) states that it is highly needed to improve existing and create new programmes through which young people will acquire practical knowledge, innovative skills and competencies necessary for the labour market. Situation is particularly difficult for girls - gender bias from teachers, families, and male and female peers drive girls away from pursuing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects and from building the digital skills necessary to be competitive in a 21st century job market.

Focusing on involving more girls into simple coding and participating in dynamic and interactive workshops was tailored to their needs. During the project implementation period, 887 girls learned how to use algorithmic thinking in coding and robot programming. For most of the participants, especially those who were coming from vulnerable groups, this was a first-time experience with such tech tools. Interest in robotics, time with peers and new friends, as well as willingness to learn new things are some of the main takeaways according to the programme participants. The programme proved to be a tool to showcase good practices of how non-formal education activities in the field of programming and robotics can engage youth, especially girls from marginalized groups (Roma communities, rural areas, social protection systems, etc.).

The challenge was to provide IT trainings for girls from Roma community – due to Covid-19 outbreak and government measures in place, they were not able to attend classes in the start-up IT community centres and home-based learning was not an option for many, since there is no equipment that girls could use. UNICEF will work on addressing these challenges and further support access to online IT trainings for girls (e.g., ensuring Wi-fi connectivity and equipment).

The change that is both sustainable and substantial requires a multi-faceted systemic approach, including: investments in ICT infrastructure and educators' professional development, changes in the availability of programmes in communities, promoting collaboration between schools and hubs in the community, availability of open content and diversified practices and integrating all these within an environment that ensures good governance and monitoring of quality. There are several ongoing programmes implemented by UNICEF in support of the Government of Serbia digitalization efforts that merit further expansion of 21st Century skills programme through scaling up of previously tested and new approaches.

Investing in adolescent girls is critical in ending the intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality and creating a sustainable and inclusive economy. UNICEF will adopt a “Girls-centred approach to skills-building,” focused on the following three aspects.

1. Meaningful Girl-Engagement: Ensure that the programmes are tailored to meet girls' unique needs and that girls themselves fully participate in the design and implementation of the initiatives.
2. Girl-centred programme components: Create a safe and inclusive space for girls, support girls' leadership development for social changes.
3. Girl-specific set of skills: Support girls to equip with STEM, digital competencies and transferable skills necessary in the 21st-century job market.

Following the vision that every child, regardless of gender, should have access to innovation and technological education, UNICEF will continue to support and develop programmes that focus on the increasing involvement of girls in the world of technology and digital skills with an aim to overcome this gender gap.





OVERVIEW

Among the **4,548** newly arrived persons observed between February and June 2021, **82%** were men, **12%** were children and only **6%** were women.

As per SCRM data, at end-June 2021, **3,818** refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants were accommodated in 19 governmental asylum/reception/transit centres, of which *3,363 men (88%), 154 women (4%) and 301 children (8%)*. Meanwhile 22% of all the children recorded in the centres were UASC (67).

At the beginning of February 2021, Initiative A 11 became a member of the Special Working Group for the Drafting of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and submitted its proposal for amendments.

UNHCR implementing partners International Aid Network (IAN), Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT), Indigo and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) organized celebrations of *International Women's Day* and Nowruz in asylum and reception/transit centres across the country and ensured small gifts packages (containing hygiene items, PPE, and makeup) for female participants in different workshops organized to promote women's rights and gender equality. More than **157** refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls participated in the activities, discussing importance of women's rights and women empowerment.

In the Written contribution to the 2021 Annual Report for Serbia on Political Criteria and chapters 23 and 24 Initiative A 11 submitted in April 2021, the chapter about the position of Tradeswomen during the Covid-19 was involved, which emphasized the main findings of the research conducted by Initiative A 11.

On 17 June, DRC Serbia, with the support of UNHCR, organized a Regional Online Event on the occasion of the World Refugee Day - *Displacement seen through the lens of women*.

A wide range of activities supported *World Refugee Day (WRD) 2021*, including partners and persons of concern (PoCs) promoting refugees' strength and resilience. On 14 June, UNHCR Serbia officially launched the High-Profile Supporter (HPS), eminent actress Branka Katić. The WRD 2021 and the 45 years of UNHCR in Serbia were crowned with a unique event of a professional theatre play by **9 refugee women and girls** from Krnjača Asylum Centre in Belgrade on 21 June.

LEGAL AWARENESS AND CONSULTATION

No new cases of recognition of asylum status were granted to women asylum-seekers during the reporting period. UNHCR and partners provide legal assistance and an individualized integration support to recognized refugees.

During the five months of the reporting period, the UNHCR partners implementing legal activities such as CRPC, Sigma Plus, HCIT, BCHR, have reached around **541 women and girls** with legal aid, counseling, representation in asylum procedures and follow up.

In specific, 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. From February to June 2021, BCHR provided free legal aid to **491** women. During the same period, in the asylum procedure BCHR represented **28** women (out of which **11** are **female UASC**), out of which **12** are female victims of SGBV.

Throughout the reporting period PIN conducted psychological assessment for the asylum procedure for **4 women and girls**. PIN assisted DRC in criminal proceedings for **3 cases (1 single mother and 2 children)** since the beginning of 2021 by providing psychological assessment.

A 11 – Initiative for Economic and Social Rights team continued to support internally displaced persons and provide them with information and legal counseling.

From February to June 2021, Initiative A 11 team provided legal counseling to **238** women from IDP community, mostly in the field of social protection and housing. In April 2021, Initiative A 11 organized the *School of Economic and Social Rights for Roma Activists* for which **6** women applied.

PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELLING FOR WOMEN REFUGEES

During the reporting period, IAN provided support in integration to 15 women and 7 girls through different types of individual and group psychological support such as psychotherapy (individual and group), psychological counseling, psychiatric interventions, and comprehensive psychosocial assistance.

CRPC (**152 women and 56 girls**), INDIGO (**39 women and 10 girls**) and PIN (48 women and 16 girls) identified and supported more than 320 women and girls, including referrals for specialized services. They were supported and empowered within refugee community for integration purposes, psychoeducational workshops, offered psychological first aid (PFA) and psychological support services (PSS), including various emergency interventions (organizing urgent psychiatric appointments and hospital treatments, provision of psychological assessment, accompaniment, interpretation services, advocacy, and comprehensive follow-up).



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, and CRPC assisted with information and referral to services more than **195** women and **52** girls among the newly arrived persons at the borders. In addition, BCHR focused on the situation at Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport in order to ensure that all refugees who arrive there may access the asylum procedure, referring problematic cases to the proper judicial institutions, including the ECtHR. In cases when BCHR is contacted by women, or a group that includes women, from the transit zone of the Nikola Tesla Airport in order to provide gender sensitive legal counselling, the BCHR team always includes **one female legal officer** and a **female translator** when that is possible.

WOMEN LEADERSHIP AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT IN REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

IAN identified **18 asylum-seekers and 4 women** motivated to act as community-based protection leaders and under the mentorship of IAN experts, they obtained skills for carrying out community-based protection activities and they started providing assistance to their peers. For the occasion of the International Women's Day, **6 women and 6 girls** participated IAN's work-

shop when the significance and meaning of this day was discussed, as well as traditional family/society roles, harmful traditional practices and customs, gender equality and women's rights.

UNHCR partner Praxis conducted awareness-raising activities related to child, early and forced marriages (CEFM). During the five months (February – June 2021), **6 CEFM awareness-raising workshops** were organized with children in senior grades of primary schools. Workshops were also attended by 6 associates (Roma pedagogical assistants, school pedagogues and class teachers).

A total of **126 children (43 boys and 83 girls)** took part in the workshops that are aimed at raising awareness of school children (fifth to eighth grade) about the risks of child, early and forced marriages, through discussion about child rights, education, early school drop-out, needs and obligations at that age, as well as parental roles and obligations in marriage.

Praxis also conducted 6 meetings with schools' principals and pedagogical assistants about the issue of child, early and forced marriages. It was agreed that schools would include this topic into their annual school programme as of the next school year.

At the beginning of 2021, Praxis published the report [Child, Early and Forced Marriages in Serbia- regulations, response and prevention](#), about the activities conducted last year for the prevention of CEFM. The report, additionally, presents the results of the research on practical implementation of the Instruction on the manner of work of social

welfare centers - guardianship authorities in the protection of children against child marriages which regulates the manner of work of social welfare centres in the protection of children from child, early and forced marriages in situations where there is a risk of entering such a marriage or where such a marriage exists.

Within the Women Safe Space, DRC has organized: *legal workshops*, which have been conducted by DRC Legal Counsellor; *women empowerment workshops*, which have been conducted by trained gender focal points with a support of DRC/UNHCR Women Protection Counsellor; *health workshops*, which have been by the DRC/UNHCR Health Advisor; and *English language classes* which have been introduced upon the request of women and conducted by DRC Persian Interpreter, the professor at The Philology High School in Belgrade.

During the reporting period, a total number of **108 female POCs** participated in raising awareness activities on the following topics: position of women, minors and other vulnerable categories of population in asylum proceedings; status and rights of asylum-seekers and refugees in Serbia – legislation and practice; family law in Serbia, prevention and protection against SGBV including information regarding existing legislation, Covid-19 preventive measures, information regarding immunization, reproductive health, access to the health system in Serbia, etc. Within the health protection workshops, DRC developed and conducted an interactive workshop on puberty for girls in AC Krnjaca (age group 9-15). During the workshop, the girls were introduced, in ac-

cordance with their age, to the physical and mental changes that occur during puberty. The girls were introduced to the first period and the importance of hygiene during the period. The girls showed a great interest in growth and changes in the body during puberty. The girls were encouraged to talk to adults, especially mothers and the medical team if they have additional questions about this important topic.

Three gender focal points, female asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran, with the support of DRC/UNHCR Women Protection Counsellor, conducted workshops on history of the *International Women's Day*, women's rights movement, and shared stories about achievements of women from their countries of origin. They prepared all the materials and facilitated the workshops throughout the entire day. A total number of **96 women and female teens participated**.

On 17 June, DRC Serbia, with the support of UNHCR, organized a Regional Online Event on the occasion of the World Refugee Day - *Displacement seen through the lens of women*. The event was organized together with DRC operations in Greece and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and attended by staff of UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, LDS Charities and others. During the event, refugee and migrant women had the opportunity to share their experience of being displaced and to discuss what needs to be done in order to improve their position. The women had opportunity to discuss on following topics: motivation (reasons for leaving country of origin, who makes decision where and when to live, etc.); expectations (what were their



expectations upon arrival to Europe, etc.); reality (how they benefited from DRC programs, access to right, etc.); hopes (how they perceive their future, is there anything that they would like to be improved in our program, how they their contribution to the rights of women on the move becoming visible, etc.). All participants stipulated importance of the existing place dedicated only for women where they could openly talk about women's rights.

Together with CRPC, DRC supported 9 refugee and asylum-seeking women and a girl in preparation and performance of a theatre play for WRD 2021.

Direct work with young people that BCHR conducted through workshops, events, and psychosocial support, resulted in the campaign "17th Day", which tackled the issue of gender norms. The name of the campaign referred to the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence campaign, and its aim was to invite all actors to continue fighting gender inequality. The pick of the campaign was in February 2021. The process of its creation involved **5** young men from refugee population and empowered them for advocating gender equality. Intercultural workshops for young refugees and local youth that were held from April to June equipped youth with the knowledge on interculturality, with intercultural competencies, but also with the awareness on how culture and cultural norms influence gender norms and roles. **12** young people in total (6 from the local community and 6 from refugee population) attended the workshops.

EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

During the reporting period, 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 immediate access to a teacher, group activities i.e. recreational, educational and sportive activities. Partners also followed up closely with the enrollment to school of many asylum-seekers and refugee children that attend the primary education by assisting them with their homework and check for understanding. More than **500** beneficiaries (out of which 245 women and girls) participated in group and individual activities.

BCHR managed to have a high school diploma of a girl from Burundi recognized by Serbian ENIC/NARIC. As part of **Refugees for Refugees** programme implemented by BCHR, a specialized training for refugee peer supporters was organized on 19 March when they were introduced to their duties and activities and necessary legal knowledge.

A total of **4** young refugees (including 1 girl) were supported in tertiary education enrollment with equipment, preparation classes, communication and similar.

DRC, together with our partners CRPC and IDEAS, has developed the cultural sensitivity workshops concept that focuses on cultural differences in regard to household, family life, education, communication, socializing, clothing. CRPC has been responsible for the family life and household part, IDEAS

'responsibility was education and work life, while DRC was in charge for the communication, socializing and clothing part of the concept. Three peer educators will be participating in the conduction of workshops, sharing the knowledge and personal stories and experiences with their peers, while the organizations will supervise and provide guidance. Workshops are aimed at unaccompanied and separated children in shelters and institutions (Nis, Loznica, Vodovodska), and in asylum centre (Bogovadja), as well as at children from families, accommodated in Krnjaca AC.

IAN conducted **13** educational workshops for **124** asylum-seekers, and among them 9 women and 4 girls attended these workshops where various topics were covered aiming to strengthen their social skills and integration capacities. Various topics were covered including assertive behavior, expectations regarding asylum, trauma and its consequences, children development, partnerships, conflict resolution, professional experience, educational background and job-related expectations and plans, gender roles, gender equality, etc. IAN volunteers, students of social work, are providing intensive psychosocial support in integration for group of Burundian refugees, **3** women and **3** girls among them, using creative methods for learning Serbian language, history, and tradition.

Sigma Plus organized workshops for **138** participants (out of which 41 were women), while **18** refugee and asylum-seeking women benefited from Serbian language classes during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, INDIGO organized **680** group activities (recreational, educational, PSS and creative workshops) with children and parents in 7 RTCs in the South and the East of the country, including **70** women and **65** girls in the activities. **27** girls were assisted by INDIGO with primary school enrolment and attendance, homework, and better understanding of school subjects. INDIGO also encouraged and involved the refugee girls and women in planning, organization, and implementation of the non-formal educational, creative, and recreational activities.

SGBV 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.

At the community level, the activities included establishing and coordinating integrated SGBV response and referral systems (in order to strengthen the protection systems in their response to SGBV, including a cross-sectorial cooperation of relevant actors in the field, Key Stakeholders Meet-



ings, and assure that referral pathway between duty bearers and humanitarian organisations is in place).

DRC Protection Team conducted daily monitoring activities, ensuring timely identification and referral of vulnerable SGBV cases. Once the cases have been identified, the Women Protection Counselor and Legal Advisor/Service Provider followed the case and provided support. DRC has supported SGBV survivors who lived at private addresses as well as SGBV survivors accommodated in shelters. Within the identified cases, specific follow up on particularly vulnerable cases was conducted for **22 SGBV survivors** during the reporting period. When it comes to forms of violence, DRC PT identified 12 cases of domestic violence, 8 cases of sexual violence (out of which were 2 cases of sexual exploitation) and 2 cases of sexual harassment. DRC legal Counsellor provided legal counselling to SGBV survivors, wrote 6 criminal charges, 3 lawsuits and represented 8 SGBV survivors before mandatory institutions. Upon the request of the legal representatives, DRC wrote specialized opinions for three SGBV survivors, that were needed for their asylum applications.

Currently, BCHR provides legal representation to a total of **16 SGBV cases**, among them are also male survivors of SGBV as well as one transgender woman. Within the reporting period, total number of **2 SGBV cases** were identified and followed up by CRPC.

PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING OF REFUGEE AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

BCHR provides child-sensitive information, counselling, and support to children to file an asylum claim and guides them through the entire asylum procedure, making sure that the best interests of a child are properly taken into consideration with due diligence. During the reporting period, BCHR provided legal counselling to **116 minors**, out of which **38 are UASCs**. BCHR conducts regular visits (and extraordinary visits when needed) to Bogovada AC where UASC are accommodated, as well as to House of Rescue in Loznica, where 4 BCHR clients are placed at this moment (including one girl). Several of BCHR clients are also accommodated in Vodovodska and Zmaj.

CRPC was present (directly and remotely) in six state and NGO-run UASC accommodation centres and shelters and in the field, as well as a number of the government run asylum centres to provide support. During the reporting period, a total of **281 UASC children** (including 4 girl) were identified and referred to specialized services. Additionally, support was provided to **19 refugee children** (2 girls) UASC engaged in educational system in Serbia and accommodated in institutions and shelters.

Furthermore, CRPC identified and supported (including referrals to specialized services) **152 women and 56 girls**. A total

of **22 women and 12 girls** were supported and empowered within refugee community for integration purposes.

Together with UNDP-UNHCR, IDEAS and DRC, CRPC participated in activities and provided cultural mediation for **4 peer educators and youth**, UN Volunteers, on creating media campaign, raising awareness on education and better access to employment.

Indigo continued to support authorities with identification of UASC and other vulnerable girls and boys, provision of psychological aid and support, organizing community-based activities and workshops and interpretation in the RTCs of Bujanovac, Presevo, Pirot, Divljana, Bosilegrad and Vranje and the UASC RC in Nis. During the reporting period, Indigo provided 1,117 information, referral, education, recreation, and interpretation services to 91 refugee girls and 161 refugee women in South Serbia. INDIGO also assisted in further actions and referred and cooperated with the other actors, including SWCs. Indigo identified and followed the cases of 25 single mothers, 16 female UASC and 23 other vulnerable girls.

IAN supported **38 UASCs (3 girls and 35 boys)** and another **8 vulnerable minor asylum-seekers (4 girls and 4 boys)** through different psychosocial group activities (support groups, educational workshops) and individual support (psychotherapy, psychiatric interventions).

PIN conducted **147 counselling sessions, psychological assessments, psychoeducational and occupational workshops, and**

visits to mental health institutions for 60 children (17 girls, 43 boys), including 36 UASC (7 girls, 29 boys) in Centers for accommodation of UASCs in “Vodovodska”, “Zmaj”, “Pedro Arrupe” Integration House, “House of Rescue” in Loznica, AC Banja Kovilja a, AC Krnjaca and RC Sid.

PIN participated in the regular meetings of the Coalition for the Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children from Abuse and Neglect and led activities related to mental health protection. PIN and IDEAS organised a social media campaign on the occasion of the World Refugee Day 2021. Statements published on partners’ websites and social media accounts.

PIN and Indigo, in collaboration with the Working Group on Protection and Improvement of Mental Health of Refugees in Serbia, have prepared a written statement shared with MoLEVSA regarding the prolonged isolation and restriction of movement of UASC accommodated in the social welfare institutions and the negative impact on their mental health and well-being..



INTERNATIONAL DAYS

International Women's Day

|,in-tər-'nash-nəl 'wi-mənz dei |

noun

1. A time to celebrate and reflect on progress made on women's rights
2. A day to call for an end to gender inequality

#IWD2021



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Under the banner of 'When the world stopped, they didn't', UN Women marked this year's International Women's Day with the opening of a powerful exhibition featuring the photos and audio stories of 10 women who stepped up during the COVID-19 crisis in Serbia. These women and their tireless efforts represent the many, many women and girls across the country whose efforts helped their families and communities to meet the challenges of the crisis. The exhibition was made possible through partnerships with the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, the Ministry of European Union (EU) Integration, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, the EU Delegation to Serbia, and the Embassy of France.

"The day when the pandemic started was the longest in my entire life." This is how Sladjana Djokic, a nurse from Nis, in southern Serbia, describes the beginning of the fight against the coronavirus when they knew so little about it and had no adequate protection. She is among the 10 women heroes featured in the exhibition, which is on display at the French Institute in Belgrade. The exhibit was opened on 8 March by several high-level government representatives including the Deputy Prime Minister, the EU Integration Minister, and the Minister for Human and Minority Rights. Also attending the opening were the Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, the Head of UN Women and the French Ambassador.

After Belgrade, the multi-media exhibition, created by Sandra and Igor Mandic, started touring across Serbia.

WORLD POPULATION DAY

On 9 July 2021, UNFPA marked World Population Day with a panel discussion that had experts on population development. Panelists were Radomir Dmitrović, Minister of Family Welfare and Demography, Ana Marija Viček, state secretary of Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Brankica Janković, Commissioner for protection of equality, professor dr Slavica Đukić Dejanović, special adviser for the Government of Serbia on Agenda 2030, John Kennedy Mossoti, country director of UNFPA in Serbia, and Borka Jeremić, Head of UNFPA office in Serbia. The event was onsite and online and followed by media. This year, the theme of World Population Day 2021 was 'the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on fertility'. In this light, panelists discussed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on sexual and reproductive health and rights in Serbia.

MICS 6 (2019) survey shows that almost one-fifth of women in Serbia do not make decisions about their reproductive health on their own, but have to consult a partner. Panelists discussed the need to secure the right to sexual and reproductive health and bodily autonomy of every person in Serbia. They emphasized that one of the preconditions for reversing current population trends and slowing down the decline in population numbers is to ensure equal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender equality. They also concluded that a strong interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach in their work is needed. Marking of World Population Day ended with a strong emphasis that only with joint efforts of the entire Government of Serbia, UN agencies, international and national civil society organizations will be able to create equality in a society that could lead to sustainable population development.