

## 1. Cover Pages

<b>Joint programme title:</b>	<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina Gender Equality Accelerator</b>
Outcomes(s): <i>&lt;verbatim from CF&gt;</i>	
Duration:	48 months
Anticipated start and end dates:	Start: December 2024    End: November 2028 Document Date: 18.11.2024
JP Team <i>Lead PUNO:</i> <i>PUNOs:</i>	UN Women UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF
Fund management modality: (Parallel; Consolidated; Pass-through)	Consolidated
» Managing Agent: (Consolidated only)	<i>UN Women Country Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>
<b>Total estimated budget:</b>	<b>\$32,796,339 USD</b> \$11,026,707 (UN Women) \$10,682,649 (UNDP) \$6,586,908 (UNFPA) \$4,500,074 (UNICEF)
Out of which:	
» Funded	
» Un-funded	
<b>Source of funds:</b>	
» Government	
» PUNO 1	
» PUNO 2	
» PUNO 3	
» PUNO 4...	
» Donor 1	
» Donor 2...	
» Non-UN partner 1	
» Non-UN partner 2...	

The **legal basis** for the joint programme is the Legal Annex for the signed United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021-2025). It refers to the cooperation or assistance agreements or other agreements that are the existing legal basis for the relationship between the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina and each Participating UN Organization.

## Declaration of commitment and signatures

By signing this Joint Programme document, all signatories commit to work together in a spirit of partnership to achieve the results identified in the **results framework, work plan and budget**.

Co-Chairs of Steering Committee	
<b>Government</b>	<b>United Nations Country Team</b>
Sevlid Hurić	Ingrid Macdonald, United Nations Resident Coordinator
Signature	Signature
Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees	United Nations
Date	Date
	11/12/24
UN Organizations	
Jo-Anne Bishop	Justine Coulson
Signature	Signature
UN Women	UNFPA
Date	Date
11/12/2024	
Marc Lucet	Renaud Mey
Signature	Signature
UNICEF	UNDP
Date	Date
	11/12/24
Non-UN Partners (as applicable)	
Name of Representative	Name of Representative
Signature	Signature
Name of Organization	Name of Organization
Date	Date

## Acronyms and abbreviations

AA	Administrative Agent
AGE	Agency for Gender Equality (BiH)
BAM	Bosnia-Herzegovina Convertible Mark
BD	Brčko District
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BMIS	Budget Management Information System
CA	Convening Agency
CAT	Convention against Torture
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEDAW Committee	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CMHs	Centres for Mental Health
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil society organization
CSWs	Centres for Social Welfare
EC	European Commission
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
EWG&L	Engaging women in governance and leadership
EU	European Union
EVAWG	Ending/Eliminating violence against women and girls
EWE	Empowering women economically
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FBiH	Federation of BiH
GAP	Gender Equality Plan
GBV	Gender-based violence
GBVIMS	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System
GRB	Gender-responsive budgeting
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
GRFFP	Gender-responsive family-friendly policies
ICESCR	International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JP	Joint Programme
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people (+ people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, etc., who identify using other terms, or none)
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPs	Members of Parliament
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organization

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PFM	Public Finance Management
PGPD	Parliamentary Group for Population and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PUNOs	Participating UN Organizations
RS	Republika Srpska
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNRC	UN Resident Coordinator
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VAC	Violence against children
VACY	Violence against children and youth
VAW	Violence against women
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
VAWP	Violence against women in politics
WEPs	Women's Empowerment Principles
WHO	World Health Organization

## 2. Executive summary

The Gender Equality Accelerator Joint Programme (JP) forges new ground by shifting away from past projectized short-term efforts in favour of a larger, more holistic and cross-cutting systems-level model to achieve transformative change in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It will do so through a joined-up approach leveraging the mandates and expertise of four key UN agencies: UN Women, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). By targeting the ‘three Es’ – **eliminating** violence against women and girls (EVAWG), **empowering** women economically (EWE), and **elevating** women in governance and leadership (EWG&L) – this transformative multi-pronged and multisectoral model seeks to achieve the effectiveness, sustainability and inclusivity of efforts to ensure long-lasting effects. Designed in coordination with national stakeholders, this countrywide JP will cover the Federation of BiH (FBiH), Republika Srpska (RS) and Brčko District (BD).

This transformative model contains new operational dimensions to ensure it delivers more than a mere sum of its parts – a) an agile way of working together, with agencies sharing and jointly contributing to outputs and activities, building upon each agency’s comparative advantages and strengths; b) moving away from piecemeal interventions supporting women’s empowerment and violence prevention; and c) adopting integrated, systems-level thinking to elevate the position of women in society from perspectives of violence prevention, economic empowerment and true participation – all underpinned by shifting social norms.

As such, the Gender Equality Accelerator is designed to address structural barriers and systemic challenges.

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS AND SYSTEMS-LEVEL CHALLENGES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevalence of violence – 47% (lifetime GBV)</li> <li>• Weak institutional response and protection and rehabilitation of survivors</li> <li>• Lack of appropriate treatment of perpetrators or repeat offenders committing same criminal acts</li> <li>• No systemic approach to prevention, particularly addressing gender norms and relations that contribute to broad social acceptance of violence as normal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gendered social norms generating gender-based discrimination across labour market</li> <li>• Women’s low participation in the labour market (35%)</li> <li>• Women shoulder twice the average EU care work (7 hours unpaid work per day)</li> <li>• Weak resilience of women-owned businesses (98% in micro category, more susceptible to failure)</li> <li>• Occupational segregation and gender wage gap</li> <li>• Risk of increased exclusion as the digitalization evolves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underrepresentation in political decision-making (decrease at BiH Parliamentary Assembly, from 21.4% to 16.6%)</li> <li>• Prevalence of violence against women in politics – 60.2%</li> <li>• Unfavourable social norms regarding women in leadership positions</li> <li>• Weak gender perspective in policymaking and budgeting</li> <li>• Insufficient implementation of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and the Law on Gender Equality</li> <li>• Anti-gender movements have a growing support among conservative and religious groups opposing gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights, and research indicates that a significant percentage of the population is influenced by their rhetoric.</li> </ul>
STRATEGIC ACCELERATORS		

<b>ELIMINATING</b> violence against women and girls	<b>EMPOWERING</b> women economically	<b>ELEVATING</b> women in gender-responsive governance and leadership and gender-mainstreaming laws and policies
<b>RESULTS</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation and institutional response aligned with the Istanbul Convention</li> <li>• Coordination in protection and rehabilitation of women and children</li> <li>• Expanded protection and rehabilitation of survivors and treatment of perpetrators</li> <li>• Stronger judicial and rule of law practice</li> <li>• Risk assessments, integrated case management and standardized response across sectors</li> <li>• Systemic prevention, transforming norms, and involving men and boys as change-makers</li> <li>• Expert CSO service-providers will be strengthened to deliver more comprehensive and sustainable services for women and girls through improved access to flexible funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved policy and programming capacities for gender-responsive economic reforms, including transformation of labour legislation and care economy development</li> <li>• Developed care economy with improved models for public service-delivery and increased public-private partnerships</li> <li>• Consolidated entrepreneurship ecosystem and streamlined access to financial and non-financial support</li> <li>• Digitalization driven by a gender perspective reducing the exclusion of women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women and girls more actively and equally engage in leadership and decision-making</li> <li>• Media, men and boys contribute to transforming gender norms and stereotypes preventing women's leadership</li> <li>• Gender-responsive planning, policymaking and budgeting for sustainable development across government levels and sectors</li> <li>• Improved institutional accountability for sustainable development and gender-transformative institutional reforms</li> </ul>

Informed by past programming, evaluations, consultations, research and testing, the JP builds on a solid evidence base to ensure that it is demand-driven, scaling-up past successful results while taking a holistic approach that targets four interrelated levels (BiH, entity, cantonal and local) for multi-tiered programming approaches, providing policy advice, strengthening national systems, and strengthening public advocacy. The JP is significant given its scope and joined-up approach, which leverages the comparative advantage, mandate and expertise of its four UN partners (UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF), ensuring comprehensive response, complimentary interventions for a sizeable change and transformative results.

The Gender Equality Accelerator JP will contribute to meeting BiH's international commitments, including under the: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Beijing Platform for Action, International Conference on Population and Development, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the JP is aligned with 14 SDGs), and the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. It is designed to advance

implementation of key national laws, policies and plans, such as the BiH Gender Equality Law and its fourth Gender Action Plan for 2023–2027, labour and domestic violence laws – as well as the current BiH National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and three outcome areas of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for BiH. The JP will build on the momentum of global initiatives, including the Generation Equality Forum, Beijing+30, SDG Mid-Term Review, Commission on the Status of Women, EU GAP III and EU Spotlight Initiative. In the country, the JP will be based on past programming lessons learned and synergized with the ongoing related development and reform initiatives.

It will be based on and advance key strategic partnerships, with its institutional leads and systemic anchors being the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE), while systematically engaging BiH, entity, cantonal and local institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector as well as creative and cultural industries, sports, academia and religious leaders as partners throughout programme coordination and implementation. The key focus in partnerships is on furthering national- and local-level capacities and facilitating collaboration between societal actors that are otherwise operating in silos, to enable joint action for a sizeable change and solutions. To enable multiple donor contributions and operational efficiency, the JP will use the Multi-Partner Trust Fund model, ensuring tried and tested expertise, reduced transaction costs and using global standards for reporting and transparency.

The main beneficiaries will be women and girls, including those at greatest risk of being left behind, either because they are survivors of violence, excluded from decision-making roles or the labour market, or facing other intersecting forms of discrimination. Public and elected officials, including service-providers are also target groups of the project, and men and boys will be engaged in advocacy, social norms awareness and behavioural change efforts. Indirect beneficiaries include all citizens of BiH, as accelerating gender equality and reducing violence are proven to increase overall health, social and economic development. Expert CSO service-providers will be strengthened to deliver more comprehensive and sustainable services for women and girls through improved access to flexible funding.

### 3. Situation analysis

BiH is a post-conflict country with a governing structure derived from the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords, that established a complex constitutional set-up. The country is comprised of two entities: of Federation BiH and Republika Srpska, plus Brčko District. This governing architecture is complex, with three members of the BiH Presidency, one President of FBiH and one President of RS, 14 prime ministers and as many governments, more than 180 ministries and over 700 Members of Parliament in a country of only 3.5 million people.<sup>1</sup>

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2023, BiH is ranked 86<sup>th</sup> out of 146 countries, with a score of 0.698 on the Global Gender Gap Index – a 13-point decrease compared to 2022.<sup>2</sup> According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021–2025 for BiH, gender discrimination, a gender divide in the labour market, occupational segregation and gender-based violence (GBV)<sup>3</sup> remain critical concerns, alongside women's underrepresentation and inequality in exercising their civil and political rights and violations of the country's Gender Equality Law.<sup>4</sup> Although gender equality is recognized as an accelerator to achieve all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the country's recent Voluntary National Review shows that BiH is not on track to reach gender equality by 2030.<sup>5</sup>

Women human rights defenders in BiH have a long history of participation in different areas of human rights protection, including women's human rights and gender equality. They include women civil society activists,

<sup>1</sup> BiH has a population of 3,531,159, according to the 2013 Census, available at <http://www.statistika.ba/> (Retrieved on 4 October 2022).

<sup>2</sup> World Economic Forum (WEF). 2023. *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*.

<sup>3</sup> "Gender-based violence" in this document shall mean violence directed against any person because of a victim's gender or acts that affect women or men disproportionately.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Bosnia and Herzegovina (UN BiH). 2020. *Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: A Partnership for Sustainable Development. 2021–2025*. pp. 19–20.

<sup>5</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). 2023. *Voluntary Review: Implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. (See pp. 112–113 for the table on SDG 5 progress shown below. Red arrows indicate the country will not likely meet these targets).



journalists and lawyers working on human rights cases, representatives of academia, and other women who support other women, although they are not affiliated with formally established organizations. Their activities are diverse and include direct services to women in need (including survivors of gender-based violence and women belonging to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups), monitoring progress and alternative reporting on meeting international commitments, contributions to drafting and/or amending legislation and policy dialogue on women's human rights issues, raising public awareness on human rights violations, contributing to education on women's human rights and gender equality. Unfortunately, because of shrinking democratic and civic space and the rise of anti-gender movements and hate speech, in BiH and globally, women human rights defenders are facing alarming situations and are increasingly targeted through open attacks, harassment, threats, discrimination and violence.<sup>6</sup>

### International human rights frameworks and commitments

BiH has ratified or inherited a number of binding UN human right treaties related to gender equality, including: the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); Convention against Torture (CAT), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and, most directly related, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol.<sup>7</sup> BiH has also committed to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its ideals of ensuring sexual health and reproductive rights and empowering women and girls, as well as the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) and its 12 Critical Areas of Concern. BiH also adopted the *2030 Agenda* and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – 14 of which are related and five that are most directly related, including goals on: gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), achieving peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16), and partnership to meet the goals (SDG 17).

BiH was among the first countries in Europe to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2013, without reservations, showing clear political commitment to end violence against women. However, implementation has been slow and few linkages between relevant institutions have been made since then.

BiH consistently reports on its progress on gender equality and women's human rights to international bodies, submitting its sixth periodic reports under CEDAW, CAT and CRC in 2016–2018, its third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2019, a Progress Report on the Beijing Declaration in 2019, and a Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) report under the Istanbul Convention in 2020. Civil society organizations in BiH actively monitor and contribute to these reporting processes, with over 20 CSOs drafting alternative reports, such as the Alternative CEDAW Report in 2016 and 2023<sup>8</sup> and the Alternative GREVIO report in 2019. BiH has also ratified economic-empowerment-related agreements including: the European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocol 12, the European Social Charter, the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 111 on Discrimination, and the UN's CRPD, which includes the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others.

Among the main recommendations issued by UN human rights treaty bodies, including the **CAT**, **CEDAW** and **CRC Committees**, as well as the **UPR**, are that BiH should focus on advancing gender equality by:

- **Strengthening the protection of the rights of women**, notably by ensuring the implementation of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and the Law on Gender Equality and elaborating a country-wide anti-discrimination strategy and ensure full implementation of the Gender Action Plan.

<sup>6</sup> Resistance is what we trust, security and support is what we need: Situation on women human rights defenders in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the way forward, 2023, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>7</sup> For a full list and dates of BiH ratifications, see [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=22&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=22&Lang=EN)

<sup>8</sup> Rights for All and the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka. 2023. [Report of civil society organizations on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina \(2019–2023\)](#)



- **Adopting labour strategies, including family strategies, with the aim of achieving gender equality in the labour market, and adequate work-life balance for both men and women**, thus closing the gender wage gap and ensuring access to necessary social and health-care services for all.
- **Promoting women's full political, economic and social participation**; and improving women's access to the financial means and opportunities.
- Adopting amendments to all governments' laws to **guarantee the minimal representation threshold of 40% of women in executive governments and ministerial positions**; implementing special measures to expand women's representation in public and political life; and conducting awareness campaigns to encourage women to take on high-level public positions.
- **Continuing national efforts to combat trafficking in human beings**, particularly women and children, and addressing violence against girls and boys, and harmful practices including child marriage that disproportionately impacts Roma persons.
- **Providing urgent and effective protection measures and prompt adequate support and assistance to women survivors of GBV; strengthening prevention and referral mechanisms; ensuring that all laws are consistent with the Istanbul Convention**; providing training for social welfare centres, health care officials, police and justice sector officials on responding to cases of sexual and GBV, on enforcing GBV legislation and on gender-sensitive, effective and impartial investigation and prosecution; and establishing a uniform data-collection system on all forms of GBV, with multiple disaggregation.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, **GREVIO** recommendations include the need to:

- Set up rape crisis centres and referral centres that provide **immediate medical care and trauma support**,
- Establish a **clear referral pathway for victims of sexual violence**,
- Provide victims with **psychological counselling and legal assistance** by trained/specialized staff,
- Adopt the necessary measures to ensure that any **offence of sexual violence applies between former or current spouses or partners**,
- Amend the **sexual offences under the national, entity-level and Brčko District criminal codes** to fully incorporate the notion of lack of freely given consent and specify the type of non-consensual sexual acts that are criminalized,
- Ensure **proportionate and dissuasive sanctions for all sexual acts without the consent** of the victim, irrespective of personal characteristics.<sup>10</sup>

BiH applied for EU membership in 2016. A 2019 Communication from the **European Commission (EC)** states: "Bosnia and Herzegovina is overall at an early stage regarding its level of preparedness to take on the obligations of EU membership and needs to significantly step up the process to align with the EU acquis and implement and enforce related legislation".<sup>11</sup> Among its noted areas of concern were that:

- there are no countrywide strategies on human rights and on anti-discrimination,
- the equality of all citizens is not ensured,
- the protection and inclusion of vulnerable groups is not adequate,
- and laws on non-discrimination and on gender equality are in place but not sufficiently enforced, including on gender-based violence.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Council. 2019. [Third cycle Universal Periodic Review – Bosnia and Herzegovina: Matrix of recommendations](#); Committee against Torture. 2017. [Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#). CAT/C/BIH/CO/6; CEDAW Committee. 2019. [Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#). CEDAW/C/BIH/CO/6; CRC Committee. 2019. [Concluding observations on the fifth and sixth periodic report of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#). CRC/C/BIH/CO/5-6, December, paras. 24–29.

<sup>10</sup> GREVIO. 2022. Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence: BiH.

<sup>11</sup> European Commission (EC). 2019. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Commission Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

Over the last several years, BiH has managed to advance its EU integration agenda following a stalemate period. On 12 March 2024, the EC recommended opening EU accession negotiations for BiH and on 21 March 2024, all 27 EU leaders gave approval for opening EU accession negotiations with BiH. However, a detailed **2023 EC report on BiH** noted that:

- gender-based violence and inadequate protection of minorities continue to cause concern
- legislation on gender equality and anti-discrimination is not harmonized across the country or effectively enforced
- femicide cases have sparked public protests and exposed systemic shortcomings in responses to GBV and domestic violence, including in legislative alignment with the Istanbul Convention
- women's representation in parliaments remains below the 40% threshold stipulated in the BiH Gender Equality Law, with a mere 16.6% elected to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly House of Representatives after the 2022 elections, 26.5% elected to the FBiH Parliament House of Representatives, and 18% elected to the RS National Assembly, despite a 40% gender quota for candidates
- measures are needed to improve data collection on gender equality and to promote the adoption of institutional policies on gender equality and sexual harassment
- violence against children remains underreported
- gender gaps in employment remain high and one of the key barriers is the gender pay gap that is significant and at around 25%.<sup>13</sup>

#### National legal, policy and institutional frameworks for gender equality

Although the country's laws, including the Constitution, lack specific provisions actively promoting gender equality, efforts have been made to align its legislative framework with international commitments. The **BiH Law on Gender Equality**, enacted in 2003 and amended in 2009,<sup>14</sup> addresses education, employment, equal representation, health care and media. Notably, the law mandates 40% representation of each gender in public sector bodies at all levels of authority. However, as noted, challenges persist due to the fragmented legal system across political entities, inconsistent implementation and inadequate monitoring.

Discrimination victims can seek judicial protection through existing procedures, with the **BiH Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination** amended in 2016<sup>15</sup> to include additional grounds and define severe forms of discrimination. Laws on Protection from Domestic Violence, adopted in 2012 and 2013 in RS and FBiH<sup>16</sup> respectively, are being amended to bring them in line with the Istanbul Convention. Other legal advancements include the Law on Development Planning,<sup>17</sup> new Labour Laws in both entities<sup>18</sup> and the Criminal Code of RS,<sup>19</sup> which introduces offenses in line with the Istanbul Convention.

The **BiH Gender Action Plan (GAP)** serves as a comprehensive medium-term strategy on gender equality, aligned with national laws and international commitments. The GAP aims to guide institutions in incorporating gender equality principles, requiring annual operational plans for coordinated implementation. Following the first three plans (for 2006–2011, 2013–2017 and 2018–2022), the current GAP (for 2023–2027) focuses on strategic goals, programmes, and measures to promote gender equality, strengthen government institutions, mechanisms and instruments and foster cooperation and partnerships. It also addresses several UN treaty body recommendations on women's rights and gender equality.

In parallel, BiH has implemented three **Action Plans for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security**.

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<sup>13</sup> European Commission (EC). 2023. *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023 Report*. Pp. 8, 12, 15, 22, 43, 44. 70.

<sup>14</sup> Official Gazette of BiH, Vol. 16/03; and Official Gazette of BiH, Vol. 102/09.

<sup>15</sup> Official Gazette of BiH, Vol. 66/16.

<sup>16</sup> Official Gazette of RS, Vol. 102/12, 108/13 and 82/15; Official Gazette of FBiH, Vol. 102/12

<sup>17</sup> Official Gazette of FBiH, Vol. 32/17.

<sup>18</sup> Official Gazette of FBiH, Vol. 26/16 and 89/18; Official Gazette of RS, Vol. 1/16 and 66/18.

<sup>19</sup> Official Gazette of RS, Vol. 64/17.

The **institutional framework for gender issues in BiH** is comprised of gender equality commissions and committees at state, entity, and municipal levels; the AGE at the executive and state level; and Gender Centres at the entity level. However, there are no gender institutions at the cantonal level in FBiH, except for several cantonal assembly gender equality commissions, and the effectiveness of committees at lower levels varies. These institutional mechanisms, mandated under the BiH Law on Gender Equality, serve as the primary expert bodies implementing the GAP, the key drivers for integrating gender equality principles and enjoy independence guarantees. Gender mainstreaming has been an ongoing strategic focus at all levels, contributing to achievements in incorporating gender perspectives into legislative and strategic frameworks over several years. However, challenges persist due to the fragmented legal system across political entities, insufficient funding, implementation and monitoring.

### Ending gender-based violence

**GBV prevalence surveys reveal that nearly half of respondents have experienced some form of violence against women;** 28% have experienced sexual harassment and most women did not report serious instances of sexual violence or GBV to police or other institutions or organizations.<sup>20</sup> GBV in all its forms is often tolerated as socially acceptable in BiH, wrongly justified by cultural norms regarding the role and status of women in society. Many cases remain unreported due to stigma, or because survivors lack trust in existing institutions. In addition, as noted by the EC report, multiple femicides have tragically highlighted the deficiencies in the current system.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, complete data are lacking on this phenomenon.<sup>22</sup> While evidence elsewhere in the world shows that sexual violence and early marriage generally affect girls more than boys, no gender disaggregated data is available in BiH.

According to the most recent data available, **BiH has one of the highest incidence rates of children's exposure to sexual violence and contact sexual violence in the region.** Roughly 19% of children report having experienced sexual violence over their lifetime and 14% in the previous 12 months; of these, 10% report experiencing contact sexual violence during their entire lifetime and 8% during the previous 12 months.<sup>23</sup> Child marriage disproportionately impacts Roma communities in BiH and there are anecdotal reports of an increase in some religious communities and rural areas. According to the latest available data, 48% of Roma women aged 20–49 (compared to 10% among the general female population in BiH, and 21% of Roma men) married before the age of 18, and 15% were married before the age of 15.<sup>24</sup> Lower educational levels are also connected with the higher prevalence of child marriage. Among Roma children, 69% attend primary and 23% secondary education, with a higher enrolment percentage for boys – the attendance of girls is 67% in primary and 18% in secondary education.<sup>25</sup> Violence against women and girls is intricately linked to school attendance for girls with disabilities, as the heightened risk of gender-based violence often deters families from school enrolment, thereby limiting their educational opportunities and perpetuating cycles of discrimination and exclusion. Fewer than 2% of children in mainstream primary and secondary education are children with disabilities, of which 42% are girls.<sup>26</sup> Women and girls in minority groups face extra risks of VAWG based on their ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability or other factors, and can face intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression with multiplied impacts.

Several **key gaps and challenges related to GBV response and prevention** were mapped for the BiH United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and organized around the Istanbul Convention's four Ps (policy, prevention, protection and prosecution). At the **policy** level, BiH has State-level legislation and entity-level domestic violence

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<sup>20</sup> Babovic, M., O. Pavlovic, K. Ginic, and N. Karadjinovic. 2013. *Prevalence and characteristics of violence against women in BiH*. Sarajevo: Agency of Gender Equality BiH; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). 2019. *OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Well-being and safety of women: Bosnia and Herzegovina, results report*. OSCE.

<sup>21</sup> European Commission (EC). 2023. Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023 Report. p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Country-wide statistics do not exist, although the FBiH Bureau of Statistics has compiled data on violent deaths in the period 2017–2021, during which time 30 women were killed in the FBiH. FBiH Statistics Bureau. 2021. *Demographic statistics*, p. 38.

<sup>23</sup> Cordis, European Commission. 2012. [Balkan Epidemiological Study on Child Abuse and Neglect](#).

<sup>24</sup> Agency of Gender Equality BiH. 2012. Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey 2011-2012. A new MICS has not been approved, so there is no updated data.

<sup>25</sup> UNICEF, 2020. Situation Analysis of Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>26</sup> UNICEF GIGA Project Connect Data from 2022.

laws in FBiH, RS and BD, albeit with inadequate interpretation and implementation by the judiciary. Criminal legislation has been largely harmonized with the Istanbul Convention, but its implementation is problematic and full normative protection against sexual violence has yet to be provided across BiH.<sup>27</sup> However, the space for gender equality advocacy is shrinking as anti-gender movements become increasingly present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, gaining support among conservative and religious groups that oppose gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights, with research showing that a significant portion.

Sexual harassment is not defined in the Criminal Codes of FBiH or BD, but it is in RS since 2017 (albeit with few prosecutions). There are no provisions against forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced sterilization or stalking in FBiH or BD, and rape<sup>28</sup> as lack of consent. There are shortcomings in data collection on sexual violence and related charges, indictments and convictions, which limits the ability to assess the full extent of the issue, monitor trends, evaluate the effectiveness of legal frameworks, and develop evidence-based policies and interventions. Additionally, the policy framework focused on rehabilitation (psychosocial support to perpetrators) is fractured and incomplete, preventing any functional intervention. Because of that, the bulk of rehabilitative services are done by CSOs and is insufficient to meet the demand.

**Prevention** is understood in narrow terms in BiH, reduced to sporadic, ad hoc awareness-raising primarily in urban areas by women's CSOs without support from the authorities. Gender stereotypes and sexist portrayals of women are pervasive in BiH media and reporting is sensationalistic. There are no mandatory courses or teaching materials in primary or secondary schools on VAWG. There are few if any prevention programmes targeting women and girls in rural areas, Roma women, refugees/migrants, women with disabilities or other marginalized groups of women. There is no systematic, long-term EVAWG prevention strategy focused on changing attitudes and behaviours, use of evidence-based approaches to prevention, multi-level/multisectoral engagement or long-term and context-specific programming aimed at transformative change in social norms. UN Women's long-term regional Action, supported by the EU, has significantly influenced society and institutions. CSO-led behavioural change campaigns increased protective measures requested by police officers by 40% in Canton Tuzla and positively impacted public attitudes. Advocacy led to 19 legislative changes aligned with the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW, creating legal framework for preventing VAWG. Media campaigns and capacity-building initiatives promoted zero tolerance for VAWG. Empowering local women-led organizations created a "ripple effect," enhancing sustainability and local ownership of results. This multi-faceted approach combined legislative advocacy, public campaigns and capacity-building initiatives for sustainable, locally driven changes. Furthermore, UNDP conducted a general awareness-raising campaign on devastating impact of usage of firearms in 2023 and 2024. The first out of three waves of the campaign thematically addressed femicide following an Internet-broadcast incident of femicide in Gradačac on 11 August 2023. In cooperation with 12 police agencies, and a mixed-media approach comprising TV, radio, social media, digital media and Out-Of-Home (70 billboard locations and 9 LED advertising panels at 35 different communities across the country), reached 95% of targeted group, which is approximately 2.6 million individuals, aged 18 and above. UNDP has been strengthening women police officers, women in customs and BiH Ministry of Security in cooperation with the AGE by deepening dialogues on diffusion of gender equality principles, policies and practices in their work, raising awareness on sexual harassment policies, promoting the importance of gender equality in law enforcement agencies, customs and improving the situation of women in the security sector. However, there are no mandatory courses or teaching materials in primary or secondary schools on VAWG. Few prevention programmes target women and girls in rural areas, Roma women, refugees/migrants, women with disabilities, or other marginalized groups. There is no systematic, long-term prevention strategy focused on changing attitudes and behaviours, using evidence-based approaches, multi-level/multisectoral engagement, or long-term, context-specific programming aimed at transformative change in social norms.

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<sup>27</sup> GREVIO. 2021. *General recommendation No. 1 on digital dimension of violence against women*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

<sup>28</sup> In fact, definitions of rape in the Criminal Codes of FBiH, RS and Brčko District require proof of the use of violence, threat or coercion – at odds with the Istanbul Convention.

To build on this, the new initiative can develop mandatory VAWG courses in schools, create targeted prevention programmes for marginalized groups, and formulate a long-term strategy focused on changing attitudes and behaviours. Ensuring multi-level engagement and leveraging past successes will help address current gaps and enhance efforts to prevent VAWG.

**Protection** from VAW is inadequate in BiH and research shows that police officers do not document every report,<sup>29</sup> preferring mediation on the spot and showing reluctance to propose protection measures defined by law. Forensic examination is limited and cannot be obtained promptly. There is bias and a lack of capacity at all levels of police, courts and prosecution offices in addressing cases, with current in-service training for police, prosecutors, judges, social workers, doctors or other health workers being neither systematic nor mandatory. There is a lack<sup>30</sup> of relevant services, including long-term psychological counselling and rape crisis centres or services with a victim-centred approach, and only basic actions have been undertaken to develop referral mechanisms.<sup>31</sup> Existing specialized services for survivors are overwhelmingly provided by women's CSOs with limited resources. The JP envisages baseline research to assess current rehabilitation services and identify the gaps to be addressed during implementation.

In addition, cyberviolence is an emerging concern, and there is an urgent need to address it within the legal framework. The recently adopted Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence underscores the importance of tackling cyberviolence. Activities could include amending the legal framework to harmonize it with this Directive and ensure that all forms of violence, including cyberviolence, are systematically addressed. There is also a great need for such services to become part of a multisectoral coordinated response to GBV across BiH. Multi-Sectoral Teams to ensure a coordinated approach are established in some regions, but there is still a need for more comprehensive coverage and consistent implementation.

In terms of **prosecution**, UNCT mapping reveals that when survivors decide to report VAW cases and initiate legal action, the criminal justice system usually fails them. There are serious shortcomings in the prosecution of rape and other sexual offences, reflected in court verdicts, with widespread gender bias, victim-blaming and other stereotypical attitudes. Courts in both FBiH and RS apply a mild penalizing policy<sup>32</sup> and extensively use mitigating circumstances, while failing to consider aggravating circumstances. Moreover, the criminal justice sector is not survivor-centred, as defendants' rights take precedence over those of survivors, so the retraumatization of survivors is a main outcome of judicial proceedings, which reinforces their lack of trust in the system. Poor judicial responses may further reduce reporting rates, creating a "vicious circle".

### Women's economic empowerment

**Women's labour force participation in BiH is among the lowest in the region** (37% vs. 63% for men in 2023),<sup>33</sup> there is a major gender gap in the employment rate (40% for women, vs. 65% for men in 2021); and women are far more likely than men to be unemployed (18.5% vs. 14.1% in 2022).<sup>34</sup> For marginalized groups, such as Roma women, the labour force participation rate is a mere 13%, versus 39% among Roma men.<sup>35</sup> Unemployment among young people (age 15–24) is high, at 40% overall and 46% for women in 2019, which is down from rates of over 60% in 2015<sup>36</sup> but still one of the highest rates in Europe. Moreover, according to a 2015 World Bank

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<sup>29</sup> According to the UNCT mapping, not all incidents are documented, there is improper interviewing, victim-blaming and no gender-sensitive response. There are also no mandatory protocols in FBiH, RS or BD that specify police officers' duties and responsibilities in sexual violence cases.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations BiH. 2020. CCA.

<sup>31</sup> Eight safe houses, hotlines, free legal aid, psychotherapy treatment and occupational therapy, social counselling and support, therapeutic work with the partner/perpetrator of violence, and economic empowerment support schemes.

<sup>32</sup> According to the UNCT report, they tend to impose lenient sentences, sometimes even below the statutory limit (contrary to Article 45 of the Istanbul Convention, which specifies that offences should be punishable by effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions).

<sup>33</sup> UNDP. 2023. Policies, Incentives and Affirmative Measures for Improving the Position of Women at the Labour Market in BiH. 2023. p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> Agency for Statistics Bosnia and Herzegovina. 2023. Žene i muškarci u Bosni i Hercegovini (Women and Men in Bosnia and Herzegovina). Thematic Newsletter 03. ISSN 1840-104x.

<sup>35</sup> UN Women. 2021. *Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> UN BiH. 2020. UNSDCF, p. 19.

survey, hourly pay is around 9% higher for men in BiH.<sup>37</sup> In the area of paid work, BiH scored 60.9 on BiH Gender Equality Index 2023, well below the EU average of 82.3 and the lowest in the Western Balkans.<sup>38</sup> Women are far less likely to have a bank account at a formal financial institution (48% compared to 67% for men) and find it difficult to access loans and financing for entrepreneurship due to low property ownership (74% of dwelling properties are owned only by men).<sup>39</sup>

**Primary causes of the low employment rates and overall economic inactivity** are lack of decent jobs in the formal sector, traditional roles exacerbating family and household responsibilities, lack of care services, low educational levels,<sup>40</sup> lack of jobs with provisions to balance work and family life, and little coordination between educational systems' offerings and labour market demands.<sup>41</sup> Women's assumed roles as the primary caregivers of children, persons with disabilities and the elderly stem from deeply embedded societal stereotypes and the unequal distribution of family responsibilities between women and men. The employment situation for women with disabilities is a complex issue. According to a report, the country's labour market shares common problems of low activity rates and high unemployment. For women with disabilities, the situation is even more challenging due to accessibility issues and social stigma. In FBiH, women with disabilities accounted for 22.41% of the registered unemployed as of 2017, compared to 55.5% of women registered overall. In RS, the share of women with disabilities in registered unemployment was only 6.42%, versus 49.9% in the overall population. This indicates a significant disparity in employment rates between women with disabilities and the general female population.

Recent data on employment rates in BiH highlight significant gender disparities in the labour market, especially in rural areas: women are significantly less employed than men, with 20.5% of the female workforce engaged in agriculture, 16.9% in industry and 62.6% in services.<sup>42</sup> The income gap remains substantial, with men generally earning more than women across various education levels and age groups. Furthermore, women hold only 32.4% of total employment positions, with just 22.6% in managerial roles. The *Women Driving Resilience in Agriculture and Rural Areas* project, implemented by UN Women and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and supported by Sweden, specifically relates to the digital, financial and business needs of women in rural areas, has produced relevant tailor-made interventions to ensure a coherent approach. Knowledge from its past interventions has been embedded throughout all proposed JP activities, including the care economy, entrepreneurship and women in tech segments.

**Unpaid care work is a significant factor contributing to women's time constraints**, with women in BiH spending more than six hours a day on unpaid care work, including childcare, compared to just over three hours spent by men.<sup>43</sup> According to the BiH 2023 Voluntary Review of SDG progress, the gap in the proportion of people aged 20–64 years who are economically inactive due to family responsibilities (SDG Indicator 5.4.1.a) has worsened (46.8% of women vs. 12.8% of men).<sup>44</sup> As such, the JP will also tap into knowledge based on care economy interventions at a global level, mostly developed jointly by the ILO and UN Women.

COVID-19 increased the demand for unpaid care and domestic work and deepened existing gender inequalities in the division of unpaid labour. Women in BiH were more likely than men to report devoting increased hours to unpaid domestic work (50% vs. 35%, respectively) and childcare (28% vs. 23%, respectively).<sup>45</sup> Household Surveys confirm that more women (55.5%) were experiencing a worsened financial situation (compared to 44.9% of men) and that 13.5% of women reported reduced remittances (vs. 8% of men).<sup>46</sup> Women from marginalized groups or

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<sup>37</sup> UN Women. 2021. CGEP, pp. 11–12.

<sup>38</sup> UN Women. 2024. *Gender Equality Index Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023*. p. 24.

<sup>39</sup> United Nations. SDG Diagnostics Bosnia and Herzegovina. p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> The low activity rates of women in particular have been the focus of numerous studies (Atoyan and Rahman 2017; Petreski et al. 2017; UNDP 2016).

<sup>41</sup> UN BiH. 2020. UNSCDF p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> Eight safe houses, hotlines, free legal aid, psychotherapy treatment and occupational therapy, social counselling and support, therapeutic work with the partner/perpetrator of violence and economic empowerment support schemes.

<sup>43</sup> UN Women. 2023. Baseline Study on Care Economy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Overview of Key Denominators, Policy and Programming Options.

<sup>44</sup> BiH. 2023. *Voluntary Review*, p. 64.

<sup>45</sup> UN BiH. 2022. CCA Update (Draft). p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> UNDP and UNICEF. 2022. [Social Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in Bosnia and Herzegovina Third Household Survey](#), June.



with multiple vulnerabilities are having it even worse. 55% of the poorest women, 40% of women with disabilities and 38% of single mothers had to resort to reduced food intake, compared to 24% of women overall and 15% of men.<sup>47</sup> BiH has one of the lowest early childhood care and education (ECCE) enrolment rates in Europe, with just 9.5% of children aged 0–2, 41.6% of children aged 3–5, and 44.1% of children aged 5–6 attending preschools.<sup>48</sup> Enrolment policies favour families with already employed parents and considering the fees that are required for both public and private sectors, participation of vulnerable families is limited. Notably, over 6,800 children are on ECCE waiting lists,<sup>49</sup> which demonstrates the high interest and demand for childcare. Although quality ECCE programmes benefit both the child and family, in BiH only 7% of the overall education sector budget is spent on this sector.<sup>50</sup> In BiH, it is estimated that a 0.5% increase in the female labour force participation rate could be achieved through an expansion of ECCE enrolment, and a gradual expansion scenario predicts an average annual employment of 2,273 women in BiH over the course of the next 30 years.<sup>51</sup> Assuming a conservative wage-earning estimate for these additional women joining the labour market, UNICEF calculates that the range of these economic benefits in BiH in the next 30 years will be anywhere from 270 million to 503 million Bosnia-Herzegovina Convertible Marks (BAM), depending on the faster or more gradual scale-up.<sup>52</sup>

**BiH is experiencing rapid population changes characterized by low fertility, higher mortality and the increased emigration of its young, skilled population.** As a result, it is expected that the country's population will decline significantly from 3.5 million at the time of the last census in 2013 to only 1.5 million by 2070. Although there are a number of highly developed countries with low populations, with over 40% of older persons and only 10% of children aged 0–14 projected by 2070, the country would not be able to cover basic public services, leaving the most vulnerable groups behind. If the level of economic development and productivity remain unchanged, at around 2.5% of annual growth, then to advance socioeconomic development, the country will need to either increase its productivity through investments in modern technologies or decrease its unemployed and inactive population. Currently, there are at least half a million working-age women without any income. To activate and employ these women, the country should provide them with skills (through upskilling and reskilling), balanced work/personal time (through family-friendly policies, among other things) and close gender pay gaps. Several key strategic documents also exist which are now being updated, including the FBiH Development Strategy (2021–2027) focusing on inactive women, especially undereducated women over the age of 50, and those living and working in rural areas.<sup>53</sup>

**Women's status in the labour market is still far from equal.** According to the 2024 Labour Force Survey, the share of men in the workforce is nearly twice as high as of women, with men constituting 62.6% out of the total number of employed persons, while women represent only 37.4%. Prevailing patriarchal societal norms, uneven access to resources for men and women in relation to education and employment, and gender-based discrimination in the labour market present a plethora of issues accentuating existing gender gaps in employment. An additional challenge when tackling gender-based discrimination in the labour market is the inaccuracy of data gathered, as courts do not classify cases by gender, as well as the fact that the number of reported cases of gender-based discrimination in the labour market remains very low. While labour laws detail rights related to motherhood and maternity protection for employed women that are largely aligned with human rights standards, there is a lack of additional protective measures and incentives that would encourage the equal sharing of responsibilities in the family or facilitate more gender-responsive family policies. As such, additional investments are critical to increase the paid employment of women and address the care gap include

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<sup>47</sup> UNDP. 2023. [An Intersectional analysis of the Impact of COVID-19 and the Inflation on Women in BiH](#).

<sup>48</sup> Data provided by the BiH Agency for Statistics in 2023 upon UNESCO and UNICEF request.

<sup>49</sup> Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 2023. Demography and Social Statistics. Preschool Upbringing and Education in the School Year 2022/2023.

<sup>50</sup> Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 2021. Demography and Social Statistics: Financial Statistics of Education.

<sup>51</sup> UNICEF. 2023. *Investment Case for Children: Cost-Benefit Analysis of Investments in Early Childhood Development, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina/ Republika Srpska/ Brcko District*. Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> FBiH Development Strategy (2021–2027).

development of specialized foster care<sup>54</sup> and respite care.<sup>55</sup> As most professionals in these areas are women (78%),<sup>56</sup> this will create a new, flexible form of employment to help women enter or stay in the labour market. Both specialized foster care and respite care are developed in the region and key line ministries in BiH have prioritized them in legal and policy frameworks that need to be operationalized.<sup>57</sup>

**There are serious learning and equity gaps in BiH education systems.** The 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, published in December 2019, showed that 15-year-old students in BiH are on average about three school years behind their peers in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. The minimum level of functional literacy (i.e. above Level 2) is not attained by 58% of students in mathematics, 54% in reading and 57% in science (the OECD average is 24%, 23% and 22% respectively). Few students in BiH are top performers (attained scores at level 5 or 6): only 0.1% were top performers in reading (OECD average: 9%); 1% of students scored at Level 5 or higher in mathematics (OECD average: 11%) and a negligible percentage of students were top performers in science (OECD average: 7%). Furthermore, the assessment shows that only 32% of schools are sufficiently equipped with digital devices. The assessment provided insights on gender differences in the main three areas, showing that girls perform better in reading, whilst no significant differences have been noticed in the other two areas.

According to International Telecommunication Union (ITU) statistics, basic and advanced digital skills rates in Bosnia and Herzegovina are below European average, with only 36.55% of the population having basic digital skills in 2019 versus 52.77% of the population at the European level.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, research by the European Training Foundation shows that 33% of the workforce in BiH lacks digital skills.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, the BiH IT industry represents one of the country's fastest-growing industries, generating 500 million BAM annually, employing (2018) more than 5.400 people. The average net salary in the IT sector in 2019 amounted to 1.582 BAM and was 71.77% higher than the country level's net salary (921 BAM). In 2012–2019 the average salary in the IT sector grew significantly faster than the average salary in Bosnia and Herzegovina – 46.9% compared to 11.5%. The industry is especially attractive to young people (up to 35 years old), who comprise almost 70% of the workforce. This industry is particularly characterized by the decency of jobs, available benefits, flexible working arrangements and unique culture of work.

Despite the growth and the prospects, the IT industry in BiH faces many growth constraints, out of which some are global and some country specific. BIT Alliance – the largest association of IT companies in BiH, has brought together more than 50 IT companies who have jointly published its first Manifesto in 2019, with instructions for all relevant stakeholders who are responsible or can benefit from the industry's growth.

#### *Gender-responsive governance and leadership*

**Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in BiH aligns with broader public finance reforms.** Initiated in 2011 and championed by UN Women, GRB integrates gender equality considerations into budget planning within BiH's complex institutional structure involving three ministries of finance (for BiH, FBiH and RS), three parliaments, and three gender institutional mechanisms. It functions as an analytical tool and a control mechanism in the budgetary process. UNDP has been instrumental in supporting the establishment of a strategic planning system (harmonized approach to preparing and adopting legal/methodological frameworks for designing development strategies and implementation documents, which form the basis for budgeting), which now serves as the institutional architecture for implementing the SDGs across multiple governance levels.

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<sup>54</sup> Specialized foster care engages professionals, including social workers, psychologists, pedagogues and related professions, provides additional capacity-building and a salary for delivering care to children with complex emotional needs and disabilities who require additional support.

<sup>55</sup> Respite care provides a short-term break for parents/caregivers experiencing stress, illness or situations that prevent them from fulfilling caregiving responsibilities. This is critical for single parents, parents of children with disabilities and foster families, to prevent job loss and promote well-being.

<sup>56</sup> 1,383 of the 1,776 CSW employees were women in 2022. Agency for Statistics. 2023. Social Welfare Thematic Bulletin 2017-2022, p. 20.

<sup>57</sup> Commitment to invest in specialized foster care and respite care was reaffirmed in 2023 through the BiH Deinstitutionalization Road Map and the development of Social and Child Protection Strategies in RS and FBiH in 2023.

<sup>58</sup> ITU and UNICEF. 2021. [Connectivity in education: Status and recent developments in nine non-European Union countries](#).

<sup>59</sup> Cedefop-ETF, European Skills and Jobs survey (2021/2022) ETF provisional data.

**The legislative framework in BiH firmly embeds GRB, recognizing it as a key aspect in Article 24 of the BiH Law on Gender Equality.** The Law defines the basic obligations of each institution in relation to gender mainstreaming and in particular for adopting measures for gender equality, harmonization of legislation, budgeting for activities defined by the BiH Gender Action Plan and sex-disaggregated data collection. The FBiH Law on Budget Execution mandates institutions to report on the gender responsiveness of their programmes from 2017 onwards. Instructions for Annual Budget and Midterm Budget Frameworks at the BiH, FBiH and RS levels detail the obligations of institutions to define gender-responsive results, measures and indicators since 2012. All iterations of the BiH Gender Action Plan emphasize GRB as a key principle, and the FBiH Budget Framework Paper continuously outlines the FBiH Government's commitment to future GRB. Entity legislation defines gender equality as one of the main horizontal principles for all planning processes.

**However, the path to implementing GRB has been marked by persistent challenges, notable from the still-limited budget allocations to gender equality** (1.45% at the level of BiH institutions; 5.79% in FBiH; and 6.39% in RS).<sup>60</sup> These highlight the need for long-term commitment from governments, ministries of finance, local governments and all budget users. The Budget Management Information System (BMIS) has been enhanced to include a dedicated GRB module. However, capacity-building remains imperative for the successful integration of programme budgeting that addresses the needs of both men and women. GRB efforts in BiH have been linked with Public Finance Management (PFM) and the introduction of programme-based budgeting, which has been significantly delayed. Programme budgeting is set to be officially initiated in 2025. Progress so far (budget instructions, sectoral capacity-building, working with State audits, parliamentarians, developing gender budget statements, and capacity-building of CSOs to get involved in and influence budgeting processes) will be built on through interventions under this JP. Delays in PFM reforms and the full integration of programme-based budgeting are creating obstacles to realizing GRB, underscoring the need for expedited reforms. Without programme-based budgeting, it remains challenging to track how public resources are allocated across the programmes and the absence of clear links between budget allocations and programme outcomes makes it difficult to hold decision-makers accountable. Measured against the SDG 5.c.1 indicator, BiH has fulfilled 1 out of 3 criteria under this indicator, namely the first one focusing on the intent of the government to address gender equality and women's empowerment by identifying if it has programmes/policies and resource allocations for GEWE. BiH has made some progress and fulfilled 1 out of 3 requirements, including that policies and programmes are in place in the area of gender equality (women, peace and security, prevention and combating domestic violence, improvement of status of rural women, and GRB), there is an increase in the number of State and entity policies that incorporate gender equality standards, and mandatory annual planning, monitoring and reporting on the public budget is in place. However, limited resources are allocated for the implementation of gender policies and gender equality goals. The remaining two criteria – whether a government has planning and budget tools to track resources for GEWE throughout the public financial management cycle and whether there are provisions to make allocations for GEWE publicly available – remain unfulfilled, as only 3 out of 7 requirements are met under the second criterion, and no requirements have been met under the third criterion. Still, BiH remains on the path of full GRB integration, which is notable from recent progress achieved with support of UN Women, including the development of a proposal for amendments to the Law on financing of institutions of BiH, improved gender-responsive budget circulars and the development of the first gender budget statement in Sarajevo Canton. BiH has also conducted a PEFA Assessment in 2023 with the support of EU, outlining key strengths of the BiH PFM system, including (1) expenditure management, (2) budget preparation processes, (3) debt management, and (4) external audit. The areas identified as requiring continued reforms and further improvements in BiH are (1) strategic targeting of public budgets (2) result-based (performance-driven) allocation of public funds, (3) parliamentary scrutiny of the budget and fiscal strategy, and (4) management of fiscal risks and public investment management. Although 2023 was an opportunity to conduct the first PEFA supplementary framework for assessing gender responsive public financial management (GRPFM), this was not implemented since PEFA was conducted in the context of EU membership aspirations and the basic conditions regarding the 9 gender indicators were not met (as indicative also from the most recent government 5.c.1

<sup>60</sup> Unweighted average calculated by UN Women based on selected budgets of state and entity line ministries in 2022.

reporting, outlined above). The JP will utilize the PEFA findings from 2023 for future GRB interventions and support the government to prepare for the next assessment, which will likely occur in three to four years.

**Gender mainstreaming laws, strategies, policies and budgets are essential for advancing gender equality by establishing clear legal commitments, objectives, indicators and budgets towards gender equality, with their impact intertwined with broader political dynamics.** The challenges and complexities faced in implementing gender mainstreaming are coupled with the multifaceted obstacles hindering women's participation in politics, starting from traditional gender roles deeply ingrained in BiH's social fabric, which continue to reinforce the perception that men are more suited for leadership positions (a research study in RS revealed that 31.6% of grown women and 39.1% of grown men believe men are more suitable for public activities).<sup>61</sup> This further illustrates the need to mainstream gender in laws, policies and budgets in order to push for commitments to gender equality. Gender impact analysis had been institutionalized in BiH, but further guidance to and capacities of gender institutional mechanisms should be provided for full implementation and follow up on relevant policy and legislation processes. By making gender analysis and mainstreaming obligatory, BiH can ensure that gender considerations are systematically addressed throughout the policymaking process, leading to positive changes in the long term.

**In the area of women's political participation, BiH remains below the global (26.4%) and European average (32.7%),<sup>62</sup> the Council of Europe standards and even below the Beijing benchmark of 30%.** Despite the legally prescribed 40% threshold for the underrepresented sex in all government bodies, women make up only around 20% of legislative and executive bodies combined.<sup>63</sup> Following the most recent elections in 2022, representation of women in the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly fell from 21.4% to 16.6%, and is at just 26.5% in the FBiH House of Representatives and 18% in the RS National Assembly.<sup>64</sup> Among cantonal assemblies in FBiH, 31.49% of seats are held by women (91/289 seats). Mayoral elections in 2020 yielded only 3.6% of mandates going to women (5/135).<sup>65</sup> A woman was appointed as mayor of the state capital Sarajevo by the City Council, although not for the first time. In city/municipality councils, women hold 19.64% of seats (607/2,483). Of the 23 elected representatives of national minorities at the local level, only four are women. However, certain historical breakthroughs are notable, providing a time-sensitive window of opportunity (spanning one election cycle) for strategic action to build upon the gains achieved and accelerate further progress – a woman was elected to the BiH Presidency (1/3 members) for the first time in 2022, and another woman was appointed as the head of the State-level government (i.e. Chair of the BiH Council of Ministers). A woman was also appointed President of FBiH Parliament for the first time in the history of this legislative body, although she resigned shortly after. Whether these events are merely incidental and unintended side effects of pragmatic political agreements between ruling political parties remains to be seen.

**Challenges to achieving gender equality in women's participation and leadership largely pertain to the deeply rooted traditional gender roles dominating the social context in BiH.**<sup>66</sup> The lack of economic independence and care services additionally hampers women from making their own decisions about active leadership roles. Women's underrepresentation is also due to the predominant male culture and environment in political parties, which are usually lacking genuine internal democracy, manifested through gender-blind party regulations, unequal access to and allocation of party resources, and a party culture that perpetuates gender-based stereotypes and double standards. Also evident is the lack of political will to harmonize legislation and include more women in the executive branch of government. Proposed amendments for equal gender representation (50%) on candidate lists have faced challenges and have not been adopted. The exclusion of women in major political processes, including EU integration, also reflects a lack of political will. These barriers require more

<sup>61</sup> Agency for Gender Equality. 2019. *Progress report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in BiH within the Beijing +25 process*. p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> European Commission. 2023. "EU women hold third of seats in national parliaments," *Eurostat*. 8 March.

<sup>63</sup> BiH. 2017. Sixth Bosnia and Herzegovina Periodic Report on Implementing the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women 2013-2016. p. 24.

<sup>64</sup> BiH. 2023. Voluntary Review, pp. 63–65.

<sup>65</sup> Women were elected as mayors in Odžak, Drvar, Istočni Drvar, Jezero and Novo Goražde, all small municipalities with modest budgets.

<sup>66</sup> UN Women. 2021. *Country Gender Equality Profile of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

concerted efforts to advocate for parity, now even more relevant in light of the upcoming CEDAW General Recommendation no. 40 that will provide guidance to states on achieving gender parity in the public and private sectors.<sup>67</sup>

**A hostile political environment and violence against women in politics (VAWP)<sup>68</sup> also hinder women's active roles in politics.** VAWP is an emerging issue, affecting 60.2% of women politicians in BiH, with 66% of women politicians concluding that VAWP is perceived as normal in politics and 53% finding it widespread.<sup>69</sup> Despite existing laws, enforcement remains weak, leading to underreporting.<sup>70</sup> Media exacerbate VAWP effects by inadequate reporting, reinforcing traditional gender roles.<sup>71</sup> In terms of the long-standing consequences of VAWP, research implies that women politicians are as likely to retreat from public life as they are to report cases of VAWP, fearing stigma and retaliation due to an unequal playing field where they possess weak political or social capital.<sup>72</sup> Understanding women's participation in decision-making is crucial as it reflects their broader involvement in democratic processes, including running for office. Women's reluctance to engage in these processes often stems from significant and evident barriers imposed by patriarchal structures. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle where the lack of women in decision-making roles discourages others from running for office. Breaking this cycle is essential for achieving greater representation and equity.

#### 4. Justification

Demonstrating the transformative power of economically and politically empowered women, including the beneficial societal impacts of women protected from discrimination and able to fully engage and contribute to society, has the power to fundamentally enhance BiH society. Discrimination against women and girls in BiH is pervasive, affecting their economic opportunities, political representation and exposing them to gender-based violence. This discrimination, rooted in cultural norms and systemic inequalities, perpetuates barriers to women's full participation in society. The proposed Gender Equality Accelerator Joint Programme aims to address these challenges comprehensively through a holistic, systems-level approach, focusing on eliminating violence, empowering women economically and elevating their leadership and governance roles.

This JP is relevant given the long-standing and far-reaching nature of discrimination and violence against women and girls, as well as their low levels of economic and political participation in BiH. It is also merited given the inadequacy of existing services, judicial responses and ineffective governance systems. The proposed four-year Gender Equality Accelerator JP will forge new ground by shifting away from past projectized short-term initiatives in favour of a broader, more holistic, systems-level and cross-cutting model for achieving transformative change in BiH through a joined-up approach leveraging the mandates, experience and expertise of four key UN agencies, as well as other key partners. By activating three strategic accelerators and aiming to achieve three transformative impacts, 'the three Es' – **ELIMINATING violence against women and girls, EMPOWERING women economically, and ELEVATING women in leadership and gender-responsive governance** – this multi-pronged and multisectoral approach seeks to achieve the effectiveness, sustainability and inclusivity of efforts to ensure sizeable and long-lasting change.

The JP recognizes the interdependence of these accelerators and aims to create an environment where diverse women and girls can thrive, contribute to growth, and actively participate in shaping their communities. By addressing VAWG and discriminatory practices that reduce women's ability to participate in the workforce, the JP will contribute to paving the way for women's active participation in all spheres of life, including leadership

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<sup>67</sup> The CEDAW Committee is working on a new General Recommendation (GR 40) aiming to rectify long-term absence of women from governance structures by promoting parity as a fundamental human right. GR 40 is aimed to be adopted at the 89<sup>th</sup> session in October 2024. More information available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/draft-general-recommendation-no-40-equal-and>

<sup>68</sup> Violence against women in politics is a distinct type of violence seeking to suppress, punish, and "correct" women for claiming public power and breaking traditional gender norms. UN Women. 2017. *Violence against Women in Politics: Expert Group Meeting Report & Recommendations*.

<sup>69</sup> Miftari, E. 2019. *Violence against Women in Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Westminster Foundation for Democracy and Western Balkans Democratic Initiative.

<sup>70</sup> National Democratic Institute. 2017. *#NotTheCost. Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics - Program Guidance*.

<sup>71</sup> Miftari, E. 2019. *Violence Against Women in Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the Western Balkans Democratic Initiative.

<sup>72</sup> UN Women and UNDP. 2017. *Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide*.

and the economy. The relevance of this impact is best illustrated through a documented estimation that the total indicative annual cost of domestic violence on the economy of BiH is 65 million BAM.<sup>73</sup> When women have access to decent work, they contribute to economic growth and resilience, and economic autonomy enables them to make independent decisions and engage in leadership roles, reducing dependency and vulnerability. Similarly, women's equal political representation ensures policies and decisions that support economic opportunities and stronger responses to VAWG.

The JP will contribute to meeting several of Bosnia and Herzegovina's international human rights treaty obligations, including under ICESCR, CEDAW, CAT, CRC, CRPD and the Istanbul Convention, while seeking to address related treaty body recommendations. The JP is also in line with BiH voluntary commitments under the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (including its Critical Areas of Concern on: Education and training of women; Violence against women; Women and the economy; Women in power and decision-making; Institutional mechanisms; and Human rights of women) and well as the International Conference on Population and Development commitments to end violence against women and fulfil women's sexual and reproductive health rights. The JP also reflects BiH's commitments to the SDGs – particularly all nine targets under SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment;<sup>74</sup> several SDG 8 targets on decent work and economic growth;<sup>75</sup> and several SDG 16 targets on GBV, peace, justice and strong institutions.<sup>76</sup> Given the complex post-conflict situation in BiH, the JP will use a conflict-sensitive approach to minimize negative effects, including gender backlash, and maximize positive outcomes for dialogue and sustainable peace. The JP is naturally also in line with BiH's localized SDGs Framework adopted by the Council of Ministers.<sup>77</sup>

The JP is aligned with the priorities of the EU's Gender Action Plan III and the Country-Level Implementation Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina (directly contributing to areas of engagement 1, 2 and 4 from the Action Plan), providing strong support to ensuring gender perspective in the processes central to EU integrations. The JP will build on the momentum of related global initiatives, including the Generation Equality Forum, Beijing+30 Review, SDG Mid-Term Review, Commission on the Status of Women, EU Spotlight Initiative, etc.

As noted, the proposed JP reflects commitments embodied in BiH's national Gender Equality Law and its fourth Gender Action Plan for 2023–2027. In particular, the JP is in line with its:

- **Strategic Objective 1:** "Development, implementation and monitoring of measures to improve gender equality in government institutions", by the following priority areas: 1.1. Preventing gender-based violence, including domestic violence; 1.2. Public and political life and decision-making; and 1.3. Work, employment and access to economic resource.
- **Strategic Objective 2:** "Building and strengthening systems, mechanisms and instruments for achieving gender equality" in particular on priority areas: 2.1. Coordinating the implementation and supervision of the implementation of the GAP for BiH; 2.2. Monitoring and improving the application of international and domestic standards for gender equality; 2.3. Strengthening the cooperation of institutional mechanisms for gender equality; and 2.4. Awareness-raising on gender equality in all segments of society.
- **Strategic Objective 3:** "Establishing and strengthening cooperation and partnership" in the following priority areas: 3.1. Cooperation at the regional and international level; and 3.2. Cooperation with civil society organizations, social partners, and the academic community.

The strategic accelerator on engaging women in leadership and gender-responsive governance is also aligned with the country's current National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, specifically Strategic Objective 1: "Increased participation of women in military forces, police and peacekeeping missions, including participation

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<sup>73</sup> Halilović, M., N. Serdarević, and F. Hujić. 2019. *Analysis of the cost of domestic violence: Estimating the cost of multi-sectoral response at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: UN Women CO in BiH. p. 13.

<sup>74</sup> See United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Undated. "SDG 5," at [https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5#targets\\_and\\_indicators](https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5#targets_and_indicators).

<sup>75</sup> Related SDG 8 Targets include: 8.3., 8.5., and 8.8. (See [https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8#targets\\_and\\_indicators](https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8#targets_and_indicators) for full descriptions).

<sup>76</sup> Related SDG 16 Targets include: 16.1., 16.2., 16.3., 16.6., and 16.7. [https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16#targets\\_and\\_indicators](https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16#targets_and_indicators).

<sup>77</sup> See <https://zamisli2030.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/SDG-Framework-for-BiH-English.pdf>



in decision-making positions”, and one of its expected outcomes (3.2.1.) is: “Enhanced cooperation and coordination with civil society organizations, academic community and the media.”<sup>78</sup>

The JP is also fully aligned with the UNSDCF 2021–2025 for BiH,<sup>79</sup> which is underpinned by the 2030 Agenda and its commitment to leave no one behind, in particular women at risk of being left behind and **four of the five UNSDCF outcomes have clear causal links with the proposed JP:**

- **UNSDCF Outcome 1 on resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth**, ensured by the convergence of economic development and management of environment and cultural resources” is reflected in the strategic accelerator Empower women economically.
- **UNSDCF Outcome 3 aims to improve access to better quality and inclusive health and social protection systems**”, specifying that “Cooperation will strengthen the institutional conditions for more efficient, fair and inclusive health and social protection systems, including multisectoral referrals to prevent and offer protection from gender-based violence and violence, abuse and exploitation of children”. This outcome is reflected in the strategic accelerators Eliminate violence against women and girls and Elevate women in leadership and gender-responsive governance.
- **UNSDCF Outcome 4, which ensures that people contribute to, and benefit from more accountable and transparent governance systems that deliver quality public services and ensure rule of law**” is reflected in the strategic accelerator Elevate women in leadership and gender-responsive governance.
- There are also clear intersections with **UNSDCF Outcome 5**, focused on stronger mutual understanding, respect and trust among individuals and communities”, and which specifies that “this is expected to promote critical thinking and zero tolerance for all forms of violence”.

#### **Strategic convergence of comparative advantages and expertise in the UN**

The JP is significant given its scope and joined-up approach, which leverages the comparative advantage, mandate, and expertise of its four UN partners (UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF), ensuring comprehensive response, complimentary interventions for a sizeable change and transformative results. The JP will also leverage its Convening Agency UN Women’s unique normative, coordination and operational triple mandate and the comparative advantages of all four UN partners. Within the UN system, UN Women is mandated ([A/RES/64/289](#)) to lead more effective coordination, coherence, and gender mainstreaming. UN Women’s coordination role continues to endow the entity with a unique capacity to promote coordination and coherence across the UN system, gender institutional mechanisms, international community and civil society in support of enhanced accountability and results for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

**UN Women BiH** has worked on all three strategic priorities of this JP, fully utilizing coordination mandate, pioneering gender-responsive budgeting and governance systems and programmes to boost women’s political participation; improving policy frameworks and training programmes for job creation, care economy transformation, and entrepreneurship to expand women’s economic empowerment; and working with CSOs and BiH and entity-level institutional partners to end gender-based violence. In gender-responsive governance and leadership, UN Women is focusing on public finance management reform, increasing the gender perspective in EU integration, strengthening women’s participation in decision-making, supporting institutional commitments, and enhancing CSOs advocacy capacities, with the aim of ensuring accountable, transparent governance systems that deliver quality public services and uphold the rule of law. In the area of women’s economic empowerment, UN Women employs a two-pronged approach to influence major players and implement targeted interventions aimed at improving policies, programmes, and funds relevant for women’s economic empowerment. In the area of ending violence against women, UN Women continues to enhance policy, protection, and prevention efforts based on the Istanbul Convention standards, including supporting governments to harmonize legal, policy, and budget frameworks, strengthening protection systems, and focusing on community-based engagement to

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<sup>78</sup> Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and the Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 2017. [Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 “Women Peace and Security” in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2018-2022](#). pp. 8, 29.

<sup>79</sup> UN BiH. 2020. *UNSDCF 2021–2025*.

support zero tolerance to violence. This includes significant milestones such as the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, changes to Laws on Protection from Domestic Violence, the first country-wide prevalence survey on violence against women, and capacity-building for over 1,500 professionals to respond to cases of domestic violence.

**UNDP BiH** has achieved Gold Gender Equality Seal in 2023, reaching highest corporate standard of excellence in gender equality, with 92.47% of its resources dedicated to improving gender equality outcomes and empowering women. Furthermore, with the assistance of UNDP, High Judiciary and Prosecutorial Council of BiH has achieved Silver Gender Equality Seal - programme tailored for public institutions and as such is the very first public institution awarded Gender Seal in the world aside of Latin America. UNDP collaborates with the BiH Agency for Gender Equality to support public institutions and private companies in empowering women at work and introduction of Gender Seal programme for public institutions and private sector is available and the most sustainable Gender Equality investment. UNDP is also actively supporting the transition towards a green and inclusive digital economy, promoting sustainable rural development, and facilitating the development of gender-responsive policies and financing mechanisms. It provides technical assistance, financial support, and business advisory services to MSMEs, and supports the country's development through a comprehensive approach that includes enhancing local and cantonal governance, fostering dialogue between civil society and local authorities, and strengthening planning and development management systems. UNDP supports the SDGs Framework by aiding governments in implementing gender equality initiatives and assists local communities by establishing gender-responsive regulatory frameworks. It facilitates the Women Forum for Development, a networking platform for 1800 women leaders and activists, operating four issue coalitions focused on Decent Work, Transformative Leadership, Care Economy/Social Innovation, and Knowledge Powerhouse, empowering women to drive positive community and social sector transformations. UNDP has been engaged in rule of law programming for more than two decades in the Western Balkans, working on justice sector reform, transitional justice and strengthening the rule of law in the context of EU accession.

**UNFPA** is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Its mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. In BiH, UNFPA's comparative advantage includes its proven track record on addressing issues of sexual and reproductive rights and health, including issues related to gender-based violence. It helps communities understand and challenge social norms that create inequalities between women and men to address the high prevalence rate of violence against women and girls. It provides evidence and analysis of the causes and effects of GBV on women and girls, as well as strengthening the capacity of relevant institutions to address GBV and Conflict-related Sexual Violence. UNFPA has been investing into comprehensive support and referral systems within healthcare institutions (capacities, policies, protocols), including horizontal linkages towards other sectors – for example, for Clinical Management of Rape, UNFPA established a comprehensive protocol that touches upon healthcare, justice, safety and security sectors. Additionally, UNFPA has been investing in building psychosocial support systems for perpetrators of violence within centres for mental health and social welfare centres – however, this type of support is still not comprehensive nor sustained due to major policy gaps across sectors. UNFPA has been fostering partnerships with religious leaders, artists, cultural workers, sports clubs, and men and boys to promote transformative approaches to traditional masculinity. In its latest initiatives, UNFPA has also collaborated with companies to establish and advocate for family-friendly policies in workplaces, thereby broadening the perspective of gender equality in the business sector.

**UNICEF** BiH has played a pivotal role in addressing violence against children and in strengthening the country's care, social welfare, and education systems through long-standing partnerships with relevant government authorities at all administrative levels and CSOs. Through improving legislation and policy, building the capacity of government institutions and staff, improving administrative data, generating evidence and violence prevention programming, UNICEF supports the authorities to improve the rights of girls and boys. The development and promotion of the BiH Road Map for Deinstitutionalization in 2023 provides a strong basis for increased investments in violence prevention and social services. UNICEF played a convening role in access to

justice for children over the past decade, contributing to strengthening the protection of girls and boys in contact with the law including through the specialization of professionals that contributed to increased focus on the best interests of children in judicial proceedings. Further, UNICEF supported the development of early childhood development investments cases that provide compelling evidence on the benefits of expansion of early childhood education and care to women's empowerment and children's rights.

### **Lessons learned and good practices**

The involvement of various stakeholders, including government entities, diverse CSOs (including service-providers and watchdogs) and other stakeholders in designing the Gender Equality Accelerator JP has been integral to its approach. From the outset, these stakeholders were actively consulted and engaged on all aspects of programme design. They have been pivotal in defining objectives, shaping methodologies and articulating expected outcomes. This inclusive approach has not only cultivated ownership and commitment among stakeholders but has also ensured that the JP is tailored to address the diverse needs and capacities of all parties involved. Through transparent communication, ongoing feedback mechanisms, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities, the JP has established a collaborative framework that not only enhances the programme's impact but also lays a robust foundation for its long-term sustainability.

There are several key lessons learned that have been identified through extensive consultations conducted by agencies with stakeholders and partners in the implementation of past programming:

- 1. Progress on gender equality can only be achieved and sustained by addressing structural barriers and advancing system-level change.** Structural barriers, deeply ingrained norms, attitudes and practices perpetuate gender inequalities, encompassing discriminatory laws, limiting social norms and institutional biases. Addressing them requires comprehensive strategies, including legal reforms, awareness campaigns and comprehensive, regular and structured capacity-building initiatives undertaken by line ministries as a part of the certification process for local service-providing institutions. UNICEF teacher training will be developed with the support of education authorities and offered to pedagogical institutes to integrate into their catalogues, where these exist. It should be noted that in BiH, systems are not in place for teacher certification and appraisal. However, the programmes can be endorsed by education authorities. System-level change involves altering systems that perpetuate disparities, including reforms in laws, policies, budgets, service-provision, economics and politics that are essential for equal access, empowerment and representation.
- 2. Tackling patriarchal attitudes, internalized misogyny and deconstructing and changing social norms,** which serve as key barriers to women's political and economic participation and continue to drive violence against women and girls, **requires coordinated and systematic engagement of a broad range of partners including men and boys, media, religious communities, educational institutions, CSOs and media.** Tackling social norms is embedded in all three strategic accelerators both from the perspective of tackling root causes and mobilizing partners for social change. Innovative approaches by UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF work with the media, men and boys, in formal and informal education and with religious leaders and will be utilized to drive systemic and lasting engagement.
- 3. Strengthening solidarity and inter-generational cooperation among women is important to sustain gains made by women leaders and organizations in BiH.** The creation of alternative spaces and platforms for women leaders to strategize and advocate for their joint interests and priorities have been critical to advance progress on gender equality. Generation Equality, multi-stakeholder's platform localized through Action Coalitions led by UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women will be used during the joint program to sustain increased engagement of diverse actors and community mobilization around joint priority areas: gender-based violence, economic justice and rights, bodily autonomy, sexual and reproductive health and rights and technology and innovation, and to enable intergenerational exchange and motivation of young people for activism and action for gender equality. The Women Forum for Development (WF4D) is a networking platform for 1,800 women leaders, civil society members, activists, women's grass-roots organizations and experts, practitioners and academia who use the network to

plan, take joint action and make their voices heard. The JP will strive to involve networks of local women's CSOs and coalitions, both lending them the platform and supporting them in advocacy efforts.

4. **Financing for gender equality is critical to advance progress, including unlocking public and private sector funding, systematically implementing gender-responsive budgeting and ensuring sustainable funding for women's organizations.** GRB is closely connected to the broader public finance management reform process in BiH, identified as a positive and potentially transformative approach in the early stages of interventions. By utilizing GRB as a systematic tool to identify gender-specific needs, allocating resources accordingly and monitoring progress it is ensured that budgetary decisions do not inadvertently perpetuate gender disparities. Considering delays in PFM reform and only partial integration of programme-based budgeting, GRB has not yet been fully implemented in BiH, emphasizing the urgency for accelerated reform to be able to track public resource allocation and link them with programme outcomes for increased decision-makers' accountability, including on gender equality. This is in line with the CSW68 (2024) conclusions<sup>80</sup> emphasizing the need to integrate gender perspectives into financial planning and resource allocation and increase transparency and accountability. CSW68 further underscored the importance of inclusive partnerships, especially with civil society, and strategic financing to accelerate progress towards gender equality.
5. **Gender equality investments are the most effective and best sustained when long-term mechanisms are put in place to ensure institutional mainstreaming across the organization.** This is the lesson learned by UNDP, which took part in the internal Gender Equality Seal process, ultimately winning a gold seal as a culmination of a two-year transformation process. This experience is now being expanded and shared with private and public sector partners, together with AGE as the co-owner and institutional lead. Implementing customized gender equality standards of excellence in the workplace is a major opportunity in BiH to ensure that project-prompted changes are sustained in the long run and that institutions are more gender-responsive, inclusive, efficient, fit-for-purpose and accountable to deliver improved gender equality outcomes following project close.
6. **Partnerships across societal actors are necessary to advance GEWE and enable systemic solutions.** An example of this is the provision of specialized services for protection of survivors of VAW. Safe houses and SOS lines in BiH are operated by CSOs. Institutional partnerships are vital to ensure standardization and sustained financing.
7. **Shrinking civic space requires further investments in CSO strategic capacities and networking.** Addressing the shrinking civic space requires increased investments in CSO's strategic capacities and networking. Recognizing this critical challenge, UN Women has allocated resources to facilitate a structured process for a selected group of CSOs to develop a renewed vision for the women's movement in BiH. Through focused meetings in 2021 and 2022, CSOs conducted a comprehensive analysis of their operational challenges, opportunities for mutual collaboration and networking, and their engagement with the government and international development partners, amid the backdrop of tightening civic freedoms. Building on the insights and recommendations from these meetings, UN Women initiated topic-oriented community-based consultations with diverse women's CSOs on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the localization of the 1325 National Action Plan. These efforts aim to strengthen CSO resilience and effectiveness amid the challenging environment of shrinking civic space, fostering their ability to advocate for gender equality, women's rights and meaningful participation in decision-making processes at all levels. The UNDP BiH Engagement Strategy for Women CSOs and Grass-roots Strategy focuses on building dynamic and intersectional partnerships with grass-roots women's groups and local CSOs to drive transformative change for gender equality. These partnerships are essential for maximizing impact, particularly in the wake of setbacks caused by the pandemic, inflation, the shrinking civic space and gender backlash. Based on extensive experience gained through its community-oriented programmes, a key lesson learned by UNDP is that strong alliances with grass-roots organizations create

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<sup>80</sup> The Commission on the Status of Women adopted agreed conclusions on "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective" on 22 March 2024, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/csw-68-agreed-conclusions-advance-unedited-version-2024-03-22-en.pdf>

a multiplier effect, as these groups possess deep insights into the needs and strengths of women in their communities. Women's leadership, rooted in first-hand knowledge of everyday challenges, benefits entire communities by ensuring that resources reach those most in need, amplifying excluded voices and fostering a culture of care. The strategy has strengthened collaboration with women's CSOs and grass-roots organizations, aligning with the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy and other key frameworks. It provides a roadmap for enhancing synergies, deepening partnerships and ensuring that local women's groups' priorities are integrated into UNDP's work. By expanding initiatives like the Women Forum for Development and pursuing new avenues like the Feminist Action on Climate Justice Coalition, UNDP seeks to create sustainable, transformative change, leveraging the knowledge and networks of grass-roots women to advance GEWE and counter the shrinking public space.

8. **The EU accession process re-activation presents an important renewed momentum** for targeted investments in GEWE capacities among civil servants and government officials, and collaboration between institutions and CSOs, which is crucial for success, enabling CSOs to provide expertise, advocacy and grass-roots support, complementing government efforts to achieve GEWE goals. Integrating GEWE into the EU accession process requires comprehensive policy reforms and institutional frameworks. Strengthening accountability mechanisms is crucial for fulfilling commitments in the field of GEWE. Additionally, the EU accession process provides a platform to address deeply rooted sociocultural norms perpetuating gender inequalities. Through public discourse, awareness-raising campaigns, and the promotion of positive role models, BiH can challenge stereotypes and nurture an inclusive society. In summary, leveraging the EU accession process as an opportunity requires strategic alignment of national priorities with EU standards, fostering inclusive partnerships and ensuring comprehensive policy frameworks that prioritize gender equality at all levels of governance.
9. **The importance of sustaining and expanding national ownership** The UN has engaged with public authorities for many years in capacity-development and support roles, aiming to strengthen, bolster and enhance their policymaking, service-delivery and advocacy functions. A notable risk is the UN assuming full responsibility for improving the actual operations of these institutions, especially when services and support are provided externally, and external consultancies complete the work and merely hand it over to the partner institution. To mitigate this risk, agencies have employed two strategies to improve overall ownership of the results, which should be continued:
  - a. The UN works with a network of implementing partners, including CSOs and government institutions, which improves the operations of beneficiary institutions while bolstering their internal capacities, knowledge and positioning of the implementing partners themselves.
  - b. Also, the UN collaborates with key focal institutions, such as the Agency for Gender Equality, Gender Centres, and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, to build their capacities. These institutions are then able to provide advisory and technical support functions across the governance system, strengthening internal capacities, and enabling continued expansion of capacities, policies and the regulatory framework independently.

**The JP is Informed by past programming, evaluations, consultations, research and testing, and builds on evidence to ensure that it is demand-driven, scaling-up past successful results.** As such, the JP equally reflects and integrates the approaches and good practices of past or existing UN programmes, such as:

- **The Spotlight Initiative**, a Fund initiated jointly by the UN and European Commission, with an unprecedented global investment of EUR 500 million, was launched in October 2017 to drive to zero gender-based violence and accelerate progress towards that SDG target. The Initiative set out to prove that a comprehensive theory of change, coupled with investment "at scale", and a multilateral, country-driven programme model could significantly advance the global effort to end violence against women and girls. The JP is informed by the lessons learned of Spotlight and models the integrated one-UN approach. The formulation of results and approaches was also inspired and informed by the new Spotlight 2.0 Results Framework and Theory of Change. The Spotlight Initiative has provided several key

lessons that will inform the JP. Firstly, it has shown that an integrated and comprehensive approach, involving collaboration across various sectors and societal levels, is crucial in significantly reducing violence against women and girls. This includes coordinated efforts between governments, CSOs, local communities and international institutions. Secondly, the importance of localization and programme adaptation was highlighted, emphasizing that while a global framework is valuable, adapting interventions to the specific needs and cultural contexts of local communities leads to more successful outcomes. Finally, the initiative underscored the critical role of continuous monitoring and evaluation, demonstrating that setting clear indicators and establishing robust mechanisms for tracking results are essential for ensuring relevance and effectiveness, and for making necessary adjustments to improve interventions based on real-time data and outcomes.

- **‘RESPECT women: preventing violence against women – a framework aimed primarily at policymakers’** – was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Women, together with OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, the Government of the Netherlands, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, UK Aid, the United States Agency for International Development and the World Bank Group. It contains a set of action-oriented steps that enable policymakers and health implementers to design, plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate interventions and programmes using seven strategies (one for each letter in R.E.S.P.E.C.T.) to prevent VAWG. This framework will guide awareness-raising under the strategic accelerator Eliminate all forms of VAWG.
- The **Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls initiative** is one of UN Women’s global initiatives. For more than a decade UN Women has worked with leading women’s organizations, local and national governments, UN agencies, and other partners to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive approaches to prevent and respond to sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces in different settings. This multi-stakeholder initiative, which has grown to include more than 50 cities and continues to achieve positive results with its partners, will be included under the strategic accelerator Eliminate violence against women and girls.
- Evidence-based school-based interventions that have been successfully implemented in the region by UNICEF and its partners<sup>81</sup> include the **“Safe to Learn” initiative**, housed in UNICEF and launched by the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children in 2019.<sup>82</sup> Findings and recommendations of these initiatives will be used for programming and implementation of Output 1.2.1. and serve as a baseline for the consultations with ministries of education aimed at development of new education policies and practices to institutionalize violence-prevention programming in BiH schools.
- Under the **“Bodyright – Prevention and protection of Technology facilitated gender-based violence”**, since 2021 UNFPA has actively advocated for legislative reforms in RS, aimed at safeguarding individuals from the non-consensual distribution of intimate images and preventing the misuse of personal imagery in digital spaces. A parallel initiative is underway in FBiH to establish similar protections. Because of these developments, there is a clear need for the revision and updating of the existing self-regulatory standards and guidelines governing media reporting across various outlets, which will be implemented under the JP.
- The success of the UNFPA **“Expanding Choices” Regional Programme** will be leveraged to increase the number of empowered institutions from one to three, equipping them to implement gender equality in the workplace and the broader economy and to adopt Gender-Responsive Family-Friendly Policies within their policies. Additionally, UNFPA’s work with the **MenEngage regional platform** will be utilized to further inform investments into education and health-care service-provision, by focusing on prevention (teaching new norms and attitudes at school), and rehabilitation (providing psychosocial support to perpetrators of violence, looking to break from the cycle).

<sup>81</sup> See for example [Steps together to stop school violence, UNICEF Bulgaria](#) and UNICEF Croatia [Handbook - for a safe and enabling environment in schools](#). See also from UNICEF, [Action to End Violence against Children in Schools: Review of Programme Interventions Illustrating Actions to Address Violence against Children in and around Schools](#).

<sup>82</sup> See [Diagnostic tool September 2019; Safe to Learn Call to Action; Safe to Learn Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking Tool](#).



- Under two separate UN Women projects in the period 2016–2023, **“Standards and Engagements for Ending Violence Against Women and Domestic violence in BiH”**, funded by Sweden, and **“Implementing Norms, Changing Minds”**, funded by the European Union, UN Women BiH worked in cooperation with institutional mechanisms and CSOs to establish 32 local policies and 27 multisectoral teams to respond to violence against women, train 988 service-providers, and increase knowledge for prevention among 270 media, 51 religious leaders and 6,105 high school students. Results from both programmes will be further scaled up under the Gender Equality Accelerator JP.
- The **UNICEF Adolescent Girls programme** in BiH is built on the views and priorities of adolescents and focuses on their priorities of strengthening mental health and psychosocial support services, raising awareness on gender, rights and violence against children, strengthening legislation and improving data availability. Adolescent girls set the priorities and are consulted throughout the programme cycle, and BiH is one of 10 countries globally contributing to the initiative from 2022–2024. Programming is ongoing, but one of the lessons is the need to strengthen attention to the specific needs of adolescent girls within broader gender equality programming in BiH, as they are often grouped in with other categories of women and their specific needs are thus overlooked.
- The **UNICEF-UNFPA joint programme to end child marriage** is an ongoing global programme. Although BiH is not funded through this initiative, UNICEF and UNFPA have collaborated locally using lessons learned and best practices from the global programme. In BiH, the approach emphasized close collaboration with Roma-led NGOs including adolescents and youth, and using theatre plays to drive social and behavioural change communication in local communities.
- With support from the **Global Partnership to End Violence against Children**, UNICEF, Save the Children and Emmaus-IFS implemented programming over three years focused on ending online violence against girls and boys in BiH from 2018–2021. The approach followed the globally validated Model National Response and strengthened legislation, policy, capacity of professionals (justice, educators and social workers) and schools throughout BiH. A key lesson was the need to integrate interventions focused on online violence within violence prevention programming, rather than having two separate streams of work.

The proposed JP is informed by the extensive and ongoing consultations with the governmental and non-governmental partners:

- **April 2022 – Consultations with CSOs and AGE BiH on Normative Priorities:** The workshop gathered representatives of BiH Agency for Gender Equality and key CSOs to exchange on achieved results and priority action related to AGE BiH Action Plan to Enhance Collaboration with CSOs, discuss challenges in collaboration and ways for improvement, including through specialized training and education, active participation in EU integration and policy development processes, improved collaboration at the local level, and joint efforts to promote, monitor, and implement key international standards and obligations in the area of gender equality and women’s empowerment.
  - **December 2023 – June 2024 – Political Leadership and Candidate Training (Training of Trainers and subsequent local trainings, as pilot for this JP):** UN Women has engaged with national experts and representatives from civil society organizations and political foundations to co-create a capacity building initiative based on the existing UN Women “Political Leadership and Candidate Training” Manual for Trainers and Workbook for Candidates, resulting in significant strengthening of partnerships with various stakeholders involved in women’s political participation and leadership in BiH. The process has assessed the effectiveness of the initiative and gathered valuable insights that have informed the design of this JP. Recommendations received highlight a strong desire for continued collaboration with the stakeholders involved, ongoing cooperation to facilitate further training sessions, exchange of knowledge, and specialized advanced training on specific topics. Additionally, there was a strong shared interest in planning future activities that could leverage the network of participants.
- During the inception phase, some more research that is currently in progress will be finalised such as UNFPA’s feasibility study on capacity of CSOs to conduct women economic empowerment

activities. Study will explore the market in terms of connections between market needs and product and services of women's associations. Consultations conducted for this purpose with selected CSOs will be extensively used to further inform programming

- **February 2024 – ERAW Stocktaking and Priorities:** The workshop brought together a diverse group of participants, including governmental and non-governmental actors involved in the prevention of violence against women (VAW) and domestic violence. The conclusion was that national legislation must align with the Istanbul Convention to cover all forms of violence, ensure equal legal protection across BiH, mandate specialized training for institutions, introduce sanctions for inadequate law enforcement, and enhance social services. Key recommendations include expanding healthcare coverage for victims, improving risk assessments, setting minimum standards for safe houses, and promoting preventive education and community sensitization.
- **Review of the Domestic Violence Multisectoral Coordination Bodies Across BiH:** This is an analysis of responses from representatives of government institutions, members of multisectoral teams (MST), non-governmental organizations, and local communities regarding the protection and support of victims of violence. The outcome includes recommendations for continuous investment in the training of MST members, standardizing procedures, improving coordination between institutions, and regular evaluation of teams to ensure better support for victims of violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- **Collaborative Consultations, Assessment Missions and Qualitative Research Methods Inform Gender Equality Accelerator Design and Approach:** Through extensive consultations, UNDP collaborated closely with the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina and women leaders from the Women Forum for Development in October 2023, January 2024, and June 2024, shaping the design and priorities of the Accelerator initiative. Additionally, interviews and focus group discussions with 65 women leaders and marginalized groups held in May 2024 as part of the Gender Equality Barometer informed the focus on social norms. The relevance of these priorities was further validated through insights gathered from meetings with a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including representatives from government, civil society, informal women's groups, grassroots organizations, academia, and the private sector, during the UNDP's Gender Equality Seal Assessment Mission in November 2023. The economic pillar of the Accelerator was specifically informed by consultations with the Agency for Gender Equality and other members of the Advisory Board of the Gender Equality Seal for the Private Sector, which includes chambers of commerce, academia, and civil society. Additionally, insights were drawn from the final Assessment Mission of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council for the certification of the Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions held in May 2024. A context-specific approach to Leave No One Behind (LNOB) and intersectionality, as well as the design and future implementation of Gender Accelerator activities, was guided by a Social Impact Assessment and Intersectional Analysis, which identified marginalized groups of women specific to the Bosnia and Herzegovina context.
- Extensive consultations with civil society organizations (CSOs), governments, youth, and teachers for the Transforming Education Summit (TES) were held in 2022. These consultations formed the basis for the Bosnia and Herzegovina TES Statement of Commitment, which stipulates gender equity as one of the main priorities for education authorities. The initiative also builds on UNICEF's Early Childhood Development (ECD) evaluation (2023) and Gender Programmatic Review (2023), which were conducted through wide consultations with relevant stakeholders. These evaluations identified key priorities such as early childhood education and care, adolescent girl empowerment, and prevention of gender-based violence in school settings.
- UNICEF with CSO partners conducted an assessment on violence, mental health, and gender social norms with over 4,000 adolescents in schools, and over 100 in both entities, which determined lack of understanding of the topics related to gender-equality, differences in attitudes between boys and girls, and gave an insight into preferred ways of learning about these topics, which are through school settings, from experts in the area, and parents.

The proposed JP will scale up the results achieved through programming and initiatives on gender equality and women's empowerment based on a comprehensive and innovative strategy for achieving results.

## 5. Results and Resources Framework

See the full RRF in Annex 1, with a budget breakdown, including by agency.

A summary of the key goals, outcomes and outputs is provided in the table below:

Goal or impact	By 2028, women and girls experience less violence and discrimination.	By 2028, more women and girls, in all their diversity have access to productive employment and decent work	By 2028, more women and girls effectively participate in leadership and decision-making at all levels in public, economic and political life.
Outcomes	<p><b>1.1.</b> Legislation, policies and capacities are in place for gender-responsive and evidence-based policymaking to ensure effective responses and accountability for ending gender-based violence and discrimination.</p> <p><b>1.2.</b> Gender and social norms and attitudes are improved to prevent GBV and discrimination.</p> <p><b>1.3.</b> Government and CSO services effectively respond to GBV, protect and support survivors and hold perpetrators accountable.</p> <p><b>1.4.</b> Expert CSO service-providers receive more sustainable and flexible financing, as well as for related advocacy to counter the anti-gender backlash.</p>	<p><b>2.1.</b> Strengthened policy frameworks are in place for a more gender-responsive care economy, centred on needs-based models for service provision.</p> <p><b>2.2.</b> Gender-specific barriers to women's entrepreneurship and labour force participation are reduced by strengthening the gender-responsiveness of workplaces and the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including through efforts to confront gender-based stereotypes and discrimination and improved access to digital skills, finance and availability of tailor-made business development opportunities.</p>	<p><b>3.1.</b> Strengthened institutional knowledge and skills, coupled with enhanced prevention of gender stereotypes, violence and discrimination, are in place for women and girls to cultivate leadership skills, engage equally in decision-making, and take the lead in driving gender-transformative development.</p> <p><b>3.2.</b> Sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and gender-responsive planning, policymaking and budgeting for sustainable development are adopted and improved across all sectors and levels of government.</p>
Outputs	<p><b>1.1.1.</b> Key stakeholders have improved knowledge and capacity to expand and implement evidence-based policies, programmes and legislation to address VAWG.</p> <p><b>1.1.2.</b> Stakeholders and policymakers have enhanced and robust data to enable decision-making and streamlined responses to VAWG.</p> <p><b>1.1.3.</b> Women's and children's rights groups, CSOs and human rights institutions are better supported to use social accountability and monitoring mechanisms to support their advocacy and influence on prevention and response to VAWG.</p> <p><b>1.2.1.</b> Evidence-based programmes are developed to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours.</p> <p><b>1.2.2.</b> Media and non-traditional stakeholders (religious communities, faith-based organizations, sports, artists, cultural workers and businesses) have increased capacity to</p>	<p><b>2.1.1.</b> Relevant stakeholders (institutions, CSOs, academia) have increased capacities to strengthen regulatory frameworks and policies on women's economic empowerment by transforming the care economy and furthering implementation and monitoring of family-friendly policies.</p> <p><b>2.1.2.</b> Relevant institutions, CSOs and the private sector have increased capacities and resources to implement selected care economy models.</p> <p><b>2.2.1.</b> Selected private and public institutions have improved capacities to address gender stereotypes and discrimination design and promote gender-responsive workforces and workplaces.</p> <p><b>2.2.2.</b> Women-owned business and women entrepreneurs have strengthened capacities and resilience as a result of different targeted financial and non-financial support, and advisory support to relevant stakeholders on strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem.</p> <p><b>2.2.3.</b> Girls, young women and women are empowered to enter and grow in the digital age through access</p>	<p><b>3.1.1.</b> Women and adolescent girls have increased capacities to actively participate in leadership, engage equally in decision-making and take the lead in driving gender-transformative development, through educational initiatives, training, networking and the exchange of best practices.</p> <p><b>3.1.2.</b> Media, men and boys, and key stakeholders have increased capacities to contribute to transforming those gender norms and stereotypes condoning violence against women in politics and preventing women's equal participation in decision-making and leadership.</p> <p><b>3.2.1.</b> Policy and decision-makers at all government levels have acquired knowledge in policymaking and budgeting to support the design of strategic approaches, learning, knowledge-generation and exchange on gender-responsive and sustainable planning, policymaking and budgeting for sustainable development across government levels.</p>

	<p>promote gender-transformative norms and views around EVAWG.</p> <p><b>1.3.1.</b> Relevant government institutions and women's rights organizations at all levels have better knowledge and capacity to deliver quality and coherent essential services that are adjusted to the diverse needs of women and girls.</p> <p><b>1.3.2.</b> Survivors of GBV have increased access to and information about coordinated, multisectoral and essential services.</p> <p><b>1.4.1.</b> Expert CSO service-providers deliver more comprehensive and sustainable services and advocacy for women and girls, resulting from enhanced access to flexible and sustainable funding.</p>	<p>to enhanced digital and entrepreneurial skills, inclusive learning environments, mentorship, networking and strengthened leadership, advocacy and confidence-building.</p>	<p><b>3.2.2.</b> Parliamentary groups, audit institutions and political parties have the knowledge and skills to improve accountability for sustainable development, introduce gender-sensitive institutional reforms to enable women's full participation in decision-making, and ensure the gender-responsiveness of government programmes and policies.</p>
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## 6. Strategy and Partnerships

Informed by past programming, evaluations, consultations, research and testing, the JP builds on evidence to ensure that it is demand-driven, scaling-up past successful results while taking a holistic approach that targets three interrelated levels (national, local and grassroots) for multi-tiered programming approaches:

- **Providing policy advice** – to advocate for mainstreaming gender equality in national legislation and in policies on women's political and economic empowerment and ending violence against women and girls; recommend improvements and develop or update action plans; and support evidence-based policy dialogues between policymakers, decision-makers, legislators, women's rights and gender equality advocates, and communities at the grass-roots level.
- **Strengthening local, entity and State systems** – to enhance the coordination and implementation of innovative policies and plans related to gender equality (including on political and economic empowerment, ending domestic violence and harmful practices and sexual and reproductive rights), and help develop and institutionalize monitoring mechanisms for implementation.
- **Strengthening public advocacy** – to enhance the capacities of rights holders (including on political and economic empowerment, ending domestic violence and harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive rights) by mobilizing and supporting participatory multi-stakeholder advocacy platforms and coalitions with civil society organizations and communities at the grass-roots level.

### Transformation through partnership

The Gender Equality Accelerator Joint Programme is designed with the view of **upscaling partnerships and facilitating collaboration between societal actors**. Partnerships are seen as central to ownership of all the planned interventions and as key to ensure the sustainability of results. Three strategic accelerators are founded on: engagement and collaboration between institutional and CSO partners; engagement of the private sector; and interaction with the series of non-traditional actors with the potential to influence societal mobilization for change.

Partnerships within the JP will be far-reaching and enabled by different forms of engagement:

- Partnership in design and prioritization of programmatic response.
- Inclusive decision-making is key to the JP's approach. The JP Steering Committee will include representatives from both the AGE and women's rights CSOs, who will participate in monitoring and evaluation and provide feedback and recommendations for continuous improvement. This will ensure that partners' voices are heard, fostering local ownership, sustainability and lasting impact.
- Exchange of cutting-edge expertise, monitoring of institutional processes and CSO engagement in policymaking and advocacy. CSOs will be key experts, serving as trainers, advisors and evaluators. Long-term partnerships with CSOs will ensure ongoing support and collaboration, co-creating programmes that align with their strategic priorities.
- Support to implementing partners will include carefully designed organizational capacity-building.
- Engagement of partners across government levels with a special focus on comparative advantages in resolving identified challenges and ensuring policy/normative to operational/service-delivery reach to deliver maximum benefits to the targeted beneficiaries.
- Support for results-oriented partnerships aimed at delivering sizeable societal change.

Through the Joint Programme, a range of partnerships will inform and drive implementation:

Overarching Partners	State level	Entity/Cantonal/BD/ local level	Other Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agency for Gender Equality, Ministry of Human Rights &amp; Refugees (strategic lead)</li> <li>▪ Entity Gender Centres</li> <li>▪ Civil society, women's organizations and SAFE Network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ministries of Civil Affairs, Communication &amp; Transport</li> <li>▪ Agency for Statistics</li> <li>▪ Supreme Audit Institute</li> <li>▪ Directorate of European Integration</li> <li>▪ Foreign Trade &amp; Economic Relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>FBiH Ministries:</b> MLSP; MoH; MoI; MoF; MoES; MoJ; Development, Entrepreneurship &amp; Crafts; Audit &amp; Statistics Institutes; Judicial and Prosecutorial Training Centre; Transport &amp; Communication</li> <li>▪ <b>RS Ministries:</b> Health &amp; Social Welfare, Family Youth &amp; Sport, MoIA, MoES, MoF, MoJ; E&amp;E, Labour and Protection of Veterans and Disabled Persons, Science &amp; Tech; Audit &amp; Statistics Institutes</li> <li>▪ <b>Cantonal:</b> MoH, MoIA, MoESCS, MoF, MLSPR, Ministry of Economy</li> <li>▪ Centres for Social Welfare; Centres for Mental Health</li> <li>▪ <b>Local:</b> Mayors and municipal bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliament (BiH, FBiH, RS, Cantonal)</li> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Faith-based organizations</li> <li>• Private sector</li> <li>• Academic</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Youth, men &amp; boys</li> <li>• Political parties</li> </ul>

### Government ownership and comprehensive support to the expansion of capacities as the key to sustainability of efforts

The Gender Equality Accelerator will be grounded in full national ownership and work in support to government capacities and accountability at all levels of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Grounded in national and international normative commitments, primarily CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action and BiH Gender Action Plan. Throughout the transformative areas of intervention, the Accelerator will support government capacity building as a key driver of continued government ownership and future sustainability of achieved results.

Sustainability of the results is the key aspect around which this action is built. First and foremost, the implementing agencies will ensure that the grounds for **policy-level sustainability** of the intervention results are laid by supporting improvements in relevant laws and policies. Interventions targeted at strengthening the institutional capacities of national partners will be designed to ensure the **institutionalization of the action's results** (incorporation into internal guidance, structures, and budgets) so that upon phase-out of the project, the national institutions will have the ability to independently carry out their commitments and to deliver high-



quality public goods and services. As for the other capacities that will be developed among different levels of government institutions, the sustainability of results will be ensured through capacity-building, mandatory protocols and guidelines **integrated within institutionalized professional capacity building**, to ensure long-term impact.

Government partners will be actively engaged in planning and implementing the relevant activities to enhance their ownership of the interventions, thereby paving the way for the smooth transfer of relevant products and work results in the future. Already at the preparation stage of the project, the implementing agencies have consulted all key partners and stakeholders engaged in the action to ensure that the work and results of the action are carried forward. This will also contribute to **institutional sustainability**.

Supporting government capacity building effectively involves several key strategies:

1. **Tailored Training Programs:** Develop and implement training programs that address the specific needs of government officials and institutions. This can include workshops, seminars, and online courses focused on areas such as project management, financial management, and policy development.
2. **Technical Assistance:** Provide technical assistance to help governments improve their operational efficiency. This can involve deploying experts to work alongside government staff, offering guidance on best practices, and helping to implement new technologies and systems.
3. **Peer Learning and Networking:** Facilitate opportunities for government officials to learn from their peers in other regions or countries. This can be done through exchange programs, conferences, and online platforms where officials can share experiences and solutions to common challenges.
4. **Advising on the gender-responsive budgeting:** Provide technical advice to budgeting processes ensuring that they respond to differential needs of women and men, provide funding for targeted programmes and achieve differential impact conducive to achievement of gender equality.
5. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage partnerships between governments and private sector organizations. These partnerships can bring in additional expertise, resources, and innovative approaches to capacity building.
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives. This helps ensure that programs are meeting their objectives and allows for adjustments to be made as needed.

### **Centrality of women human rights defenders and women-led civil society organizations**

The Gender Equality Accelerator recognizes the central role and restrained capacities of CSOs in promoting gender equality, representing groups at risk of being left behind, providing essential services, mobilizing advocacy, expanding public awareness and ensuring accountability for national and international commitments and standards. The ability of CSOs and women human rights defenders to operate freely is further restrained by the shrinking civic space and worrying legislative trends to limit their independence.

Thus, the JP will engage with CSOs and women human rights defenders on all four key dimensions:

- **Supporting organizational capacities and resources** – CSOs will be supported both directly and as implementing partners, with dedicated resources for organizational capacity-building and support to programmatic priorities.
- **Mobilizing networking and joint action** – the CSO sphere of influence and engagement will be significantly expanded through dedicated support for networking and mobilizing for joint actions with combined influence on institutional action across government levels and expanded influence.

- **Facilitating partnerships with governments and private sector** – mobilization will promote joint action and multistakeholder partnerships and expand CSO capacities to engage proactively with the private sector and institutional partners to address key concerns faced by their constituencies, influence policies and budgets, ensure accountability and achievement of key normative standards, shape private sector practices and promote awareness on GEWE and achieving equality of all people.
- **Inclusive decision-making** – to ensure that CSO and grass-roots voices are heard and that the JP adequately responds to the changing needs of the context, the JP Steering Board will include representatives from women’s rights and grass-roots CSOs. This holistic strategy will ensure that local actors lead the pursuit of gender equality, fostering ownership, sustainability and lasting impact.

## Leave No-one Behind (LNOB) and the intersectional approach

The JP will operate recognizing the critical intersection between poverty, lack of power and gender inequality. It will include a comprehensive examination of these relationships and dynamics, focusing on how poverty exacerbates gender disparities and how gender inequality, in turn, perpetuates cycles of poverty. To ensure that the JP targets the most vulnerable groups, the team will employ an intersectional approach, relying on the findings of recent UNDP and UNICEF Social Impact Assessments and UNDP's Intersectional Analysis<sup>83</sup> to adequately target the most marginalized women, including those living in poverty, ethnic minorities, single mothers, young, old, rural women, women with disabilities, Roma, LGBTQI+ and women facing multiple layers of discrimination. All actions will be informed by quantitative data and qualitative insights from the said research, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the vulnerabilities faced by different groups of women.

The JP will prioritize interventions that directly address the needs of these vulnerable groups. For example, marginalized groups of women will be systematically included in programmes designed to enhance economic and leadership opportunities. Additionally, advocacy campaigns will be implemented to raise awareness about the specific challenges faced by poor and otherwise marginalized groups of women and ensure programmatic response and/or policy changes that address these issues.

To adopt a "leave no one behind" approach, the JP will ensure that all project activities are inclusive and accessible. This includes adapting communication strategies to reach those with limited literacy, disabilities or those living in remote areas, providing support services such as childcare and transportation to enable participation in programme activities. Furthermore, the JP will incorporate continuous monitoring and evaluation to track progress and make data-driven adjustments, ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable are consistently met.

Lessons learned and good practices will be more specifically documented and distributed. A feedback loop with beneficiaries will be established to gather real-time information on what works and what does not, enabling adaptive management. By integrating these elements, the JP will effectively address the intersections of poverty, power and gender inequality, ensuring that the most vulnerable groups of women are reached and supported.

## Transformative Impact Areas

### **Transformative Impact Area 1: ELIMINATE violence against women and girls (EVAWG):**

To address the intersections between child maltreatment and intimate partner violence, in line with SDGs 5, 16 and 17, UNSDCF Outcomes 3 and 5, and GAP Priority Areas 1.1, 2.4 and 3.2, this pillar will seek to achieve the impact-level goal **women and girls in BiH live a life free from all forms of violence** through the following outputs, activities and partnerships:

#### **Output 1.1.1: Key stakeholders have improved knowledge and capacities to expand and implement evidence-based policies, programmes and legislation to address VAWG:**

##### ***Activity 1.1.1.1. Provide expertise to relevant institutions for the integration of international standards and effective monitoring of the policies and programmes for ending violence against women and girls***

- Support the authorities of BiH to further strengthening legislative and policy frameworks at different levels in alignment with the Istanbul Convention, its General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of VAWG, as well as other international and regional standards by:
  - Analysing compliance of the existing legislative and policy frameworks around VAWG and existing legislative initiatives with the Istanbul Convention and other relevant international and regional standards, including recommendations of pertinent treaty bodies and special procedures.

<sup>83</sup> See, UNDP. 2023. [An Intersectional Analysis of the Differential Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis and Inflation on Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#).

- Advising and supporting governments at different levels in legislative and policy reforms aimed at aligning with the Istanbul Convention and other relevant standards.
- Supporting advocacy efforts of civil society organizations to strengthen the revision and implementation of legislation and policies and identifying practical challenges and bottlenecks in terms of substantive and procedural law or its enforcement.
- Supporting the BiH AGE on the enhancement of the gender equality institutional framework in BiH. This includes supporting data collection, public awareness campaigns, institutional partnerships, and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, all essential for achieving gender equality in BiH.
- Conducting assessments to guide and inform plans to address gaps at both service and policy levels, including legislative provisions and ensure alignment with international standards.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in partnership with the AGE and CSOs.

***Activity 1.1.1.2. Provide technical assistance in integrating gender into public policymaking, monitoring, evaluation and budgeting across sectors at all levels around the prevention of, and responses to, GBV.***

- Strengthen a systemic approach to addressing VAWG through the development of a specialized programming handbook on EVAWG policies, budgets, and reporting mechanisms. This handbook will be specifically designed for key line ministries (Justice, Interior and Health) and targeted local communities with significant budgets (Banja Luka, Mostar, Sarajevo) that have demonstrated robust local responses to VAWG.
- Facilitate the effective use of this handbook by launching EVAWG Labs which will be mentored programmes enabling public institutions to develop detailed and all-encompassing policy responses to VAWG, using the handbook as a foundational resource.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA (with technical inputs from UNICEF focused on addressing violence against children) in partnership with selected institutions at all government levels (State, entities, cantons and cities/municipalities) across BiH.

***Activity 1.1.1.3. Support capacity-development for new appointees, mid-level professionals and decision-makers on protection from VAWG and prevention of VAWG.***

- Establish an induction training programme for new appointees, mid-level professionals and decision-makers addressing three crucial aspects: understanding ending VAWG within the BiH legislative framework; contextualizing VAWG within current public policies and mechanisms; and budgeting and monitoring for ending VAWG to ensure the long-term sustainability of these initiatives.
- Adapt the induction training programme into an e-learning format to reduce future implementation costs. A core group of 'Trainers of Trainers' will promote the course's use across partner institutions, thus ensuring widespread dissemination and application of its key tenets and strategies.
- Provide capacity-development to staff of the gender equality institutional mechanisms on advocacy around ending VAWG and on monitoring the implementation of the country's commitments under relevant international agreements.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with the AGE, Gender Centre of Federation of BiH and Gender Centre of Republika Srpska.

***Activity 1.1.1.4. Study on gender stereotypes in education materials and survey of teaching staff attitudes towards gender equality and inclusion, to identify recommendations for policy decisions of relevant education authorities.***

- Produce study on gender stereotypes present in educational curricula and materials, alongside a detailed survey assessing teaching staff attitudes towards gender equality and inclusion. The findings will provide robust recommendations to assist policy decisions by relevant education authorities.
- The studies will systematically investigate the prevalence of gender stereotypes within school textbooks and curricula across selected administrative units and various subject areas, including healthy lifestyles and non-violence programs - seeking to illuminate biases that might exist covertly within educational environments, informing targeted policy interventions.

This activity will be implemented by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in partnership with administrative units of diverse levels of educational institutions.

***Activity 1.1.1.5. Implement a public awareness campaign to encourage diversification of educational choices for boys and girls, also towards STEM education for girls***

- Launch a dynamic public awareness campaign aimed at promoting a broader range of educational and career choices among boys and girls, with a specific emphasis on encouraging girls to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education.
- This campaign seeks to address and alter the deep-seated stereotypes that often guide the career and educational choices of young people – and by targeting these stereotypes and promoting diverse educational pathways, particularly in STEM fields for girls, the campaign will contribute to broader societal change towards gender equality in education and professional sectors.

This activity will be implemented by UNDP and UNICEF in engagement with education authorities, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

***Activity 1.1.1.6. Study on gender-based discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and mobbing at work to identify existence and implementation of anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies***

- Conduct an extensive study that investigates the prevalence and nature of gender-based discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and mobbing at work across BiH aiming to provide a detailed analysis of the existing challenges and systemic issues related to gender-based misconduct in the workplace.
- The study will inform the development of more robust anti-discrimination frameworks and support efforts to create a safer and more equitable work environment by identifying these patterns and the effectiveness of current policies.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA through involving diverse cross-section of industries and professions.

***Activity 1.1.1.7. Further develop the Gender Equality Index (GEI) for BiH for monitoring gender policy impacts at all levels and assessing progress towards gender equality in all areas***

- Refine and expand the Gender Equality Index (GEI) for BiH, enabling comprehensive monitoring of gender policy impacts at all levels and assessing progress towards gender equality across all sectors.
- The proposed action seeks to enhance the Gender Equality Index (GEI) for Bosnia and Herzegovina by expanding its domains and refining methodologies for collecting, processing, and disseminating sex-disaggregated data. This effort will equip key stakeholders with precise, actionable data to inform policy and intervention strategies by aligning with Eurostat standards and concentrating on key aspects of GBV. The improved GEI will serve as a critical tool for monitoring gender equality, enabling policymakers, researchers, and advocacy groups to track progress, pinpoint areas for improvement, and tailor interventions effectively. Establishing a clear, measurable framework through this initiative will significantly bolster the systematic enhancement of gender-related policies and practices throughout the nation.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNDP involving key stakeholders across BiH

**Output 1.1.2. Stakeholders and policymakers have enhanced and robust data to enable decision-making and streamlined responses to VAWG:**

***Activity 1.1.2.1. Support the improvement and alignment of administrative data-collection and information-management systems around VAWG to support evidence-based decision-making.***

- Develop a concept for a unified VAWG case-management system for an efficient and coordinated inter-agency response by sharing case-related information in real time while observing the relevant privacy and confidentiality laws and considerations. The system will eliminate existing inconsistencies and gaps in administrative data produced across sectors. This activity will involve:
  - Assessing current data-collection mechanisms utilized by the ministries.
  - Establishing an initial framework for a data-collection system that leverages existing capacities and infrastructures, while also enhancing the quality of data-gathering and processing.
  - Developing Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) guidelines consistent with the new framework and existing legislation.
  - Comprehensive training for service-providers on GBVIMS protocols across all relevant ministry departments.
  - Creating a data portal to centralize and aggregate the information collected through the GBVIMS, facilitating better access to and analysis of data for informed decision-making.
  - Building on regional experiences and the knowledge gained from the UN's engagement, the project aims to prevent the creation of multiple, competing data collection systems that overburden service-providers. Instead, it will enhance existing legal obligations for data collection by standardizing, integrating and streamlining data intake forms to ensure that they are unified, interoperable and efficient.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with key stakeholders such as State, entity, cantonal ministries and administrative data producers on VAWG, especially in law enforcement, the judiciary and social services, as well as CSOs providing specialized services to survivors and women at risk.

***Activity 1.1.2.2. Support capacity-development of statistics offices for analysing administrative data on VAWG and informing policymaking on ending VAWG.***

- The planned activities include conducting training sessions for statistical staff on VAWG data collection and analysis, developing standardized methodologies and tools, and implementing pilot surveys to test new approaches. Efforts will also focus on improving the coordination of administrative data collection among relevant institutions such as police, social services, and healthcare. International experts will be engaged to provide technical assistance, while centralized databases will be established for ongoing monitoring of VAWG data in line with SDG 5.2. Regular reports with policy recommendations will be produced, and the collected data will be used to design evidence-based public awareness campaigns focused on preventing violence against women and girls.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with statistical institutions, gender institutional mechanisms and the key State, entity and cantonal ministries and administrative data producers on VAWG, especially in law enforcement, the judiciary and social services.

***Activity 1.1.2.3. Conduct a study on the prevalence of VAWG in BiH.***

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is limited time-series data on violence against women and girls (VAWG). Therefore, the Joint Programme proposes conducting a follow-up national study in 2027, seven years after the last study conducted in 2019 by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

- This third national study on VAW will furnish the State, international and non-governmental organizations with essential data to enhance their comprehension of VAWG. It will enable evidence-based decision-making in formulating policies and programmes on ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG).
- Furthermore, it will assist BiH in achieving SDG 17.18 by facilitating data disaggregation, tracking progress on relevant SDG targets, and fulfilling data-collection obligations outlined in Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention.
- A follow-up study will also equip the UN system and BiH governments at all levels with new indicators and baselines, reflecting expanded definitions of violence, including emerging issues such as digital violence and the enduring impacts on long-term survivors of violence.
- Continuing from the first national study on VAW, UN will pay close attention to consult CSOs in reviewing questionnaires (testing phase), including continuing the good practice of partnering with CSOs in training enumerators in a sensitive approach (field work), and providing psychological support to research participants adversely affected by the survey due to trauma (anti-burnout training after field work is complete).
- As in the initial study in 2013, there will be a consideration of the most appropriate methodology to be used, to ensure relevant longitudinal and other comparisons, and the study prepared and executed in close partnership and full ownership of State and entity statistical institutions (including full ownership of knowledge and ensuring additional needed capacity-building).

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with statistical institutions, gender institutional mechanisms and the key State, entity and cantonal ministries and administrative data producers on VAWG, especially in law enforcement, the judiciary and social services. Additionally, agencies will partner with CSOs to further support the process, including toolkits.

#### ***Activity 1.1.2.4. Conduct a country-wide survey on violence against children and youth (VACY)***

- Existing information, particularly concerning violence against children stems from the 2011/2012 Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), rendering it severely outdated. The reliance on obsolete data compromises the effectiveness of evidence-based programming and policymaking. As such, this activity seeks to provide more relevant, up-to-date data on violence against children and youth by conducting robust data collection and analysis. The data generated will not only equip policymakers with the insights needed for informed decision-making but also lay the groundwork for effective prevention and early intervention strategies that are critical for addressing the issue of violence against girls and boys. This effort is especially timely given the escalating violence against children, as evidenced by 1) the cases of femicides impacting children and 2) the recent school violence incidents in Serbia and BiH. This activity will include a dissemination plan, developed jointly with UN agencies and governmental communications teams, to share results with decision-makers, children and women and the public. This will include events targeting decision-makers, including parliamentarians, ministers, and technical staff, with the aim of influencing policies and programmes. UNICEF complies to Global Ethical Research Standards Involving Children and all data collection including children undergoes the review by UNICEF global Ethics Review Board. This includes guidelines on harms and benefits in research involving children, include significant emphasis on researchers' responsibilities to justify the inclusion of children in research and protect them from harm, during and after the research, with additional emphasis on children who are particularly vulnerable.

This activity will be implemented by UNICEF and UNFPA in partnership with BiH Agency for Statistics and other relevant stakeholders.

#### ***Activity 1.1.2.5 Conduct analysis of the intersections of VAWG and VACY based on the findings of the studies under 1.4.2. and 1.4.3.***



Analysing the intersections of VAWG and VACY involves examining how these forms of violence intersect and overlap within the context of a particular society or community.

- Section 1.4.2, which pertains to a study focusing on VAWG, will examine the prevalence, types, and patterns of violence experienced by women and girls. The study will also explore factors contributing to VAWG, such as cultural norms, gender inequality and socioeconomic disparities.
- Section 1.4.3, which will focus on violence against children and youth, will similarly analyse the prevalence, types and dynamics of violence experienced by this demographic group.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNICEF and in partnership with BiH Agency for Statistics and other relevant stakeholders.

***Activity 1.1.2.6 Share the findings and recommendations of the studies conducted under this action as widely as possible and ensure they are used to influence policies and programmes to end VAWG and VACY.***

The findings and recommendations from these studies on VAWG and VACY can be disseminated and utilized to influence policies and programmes through various means. This includes publication in academic journals, creation of policy briefs and reports tailored to different stakeholders, presentation at conferences and workshops, media outreach via press releases and interviews, utilization of online platforms, direct engagement with policymakers, capacity-building for stakeholders, fostering partnerships, establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA and in partnership with BiH Agency for Statistics and other relevant stakeholders.

**Output 1.1.3: Women and children's rights groups, CSOs and human rights institutions are better supported to use social accountability and monitoring mechanisms to support their advocacy and influence on prevention and response to VAWG:**

***Activity 1.1.3.1. Support for the systemic monitoring and assessment of the implementation of policies and laws around EVAWG.***

- Engage the extensive network of CSO partners, activists, advocates and community leaders to add a supplementary layer of transparency, control and oversight, expanding on the monitoring and advisory support outlined in Activity 1.1.1.1. for gender equality mechanisms.
- Support CSOs and provide scholarships to researchers in collaboration with academic institutions to initiate advocacy, awareness and promotional campaigns to educate the public on the commitments and responsibilities assumed by public authorities regarding EVAWG. This initiative is designed to utilize the community as a vigilant entity, effectively functioning as a civic watchdog. Inputs from this wide network of engaged citizens will feed into a centralized platform, enhancing the accountability of decision-makers and service-providers to the public. This approach not only increases governmental transparency but also fosters a participatory environment where civil society can contribute to the systemic monitoring and assessment of the implementation of policies and laws concerning EVAWG.
- To ensure that support to CSOs is both impartial, and in line with their actual needs in the field, UN agencies will engage a group of prominent CSOs to design the call for proposals before deploying it country-wide. The design and deployment of a call for proposals will be separate and inclusive of all relevant stakeholders to ensure an impartial approach.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with Gender Centres from the Federation of BiH and RS, Ombudspersons institutions and relevant ministries, including networks of CSOs working on the issue of VAWG.

***Activity 1.1.3.2. Support monitoring of service-provision and the multisectoral approach to EVAWG.***

- Support CSOs in conducting an in-depth comprehensive review of multisectoral coordination bodies across the country to support the authorities of BiH in further strengthening multi-agency cooperation under local/cantonal coordination mechanisms, in line with GREVIO recommendations.
- Convene service-providers for young persons, child- and adolescent-led organizations and organizations working on children's rights to provide and collect feedback on service-delivery and use it to develop recommendations on how to strengthen the multisectoral approach to addressing GBV.
- Implement a pilot in three locations to strengthen the monitoring and integration of child and adolescent survivors' views to improve multisectoral service-delivery. The pilot intervention will be implemented in collaboration with relevant service-providers including Centres for Social Welfare (CSWs), Centres for Mental Health (CMHs), police, judiciary, health, education providers, and local CSOs providing services in three municipalities. The aim is to develop an approach to social accountability, monitoring and feedback at the local level that is accessible to children and adolescents, utilized by providers to improve and adapt services, and is scaled up and adopted at the entity/district levels following piloting.
- Collaborate with specialized associations, CSOs and media partners to establish a detailed monitoring system to closely scrutinize referral processes and multisectoral care, justice and support provided to survivors of violence, going beyond basic data collection. The focus will be on assessing the quality and effectiveness of services rendered and the tangible outcomes for survivors.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in partnership with relevant stakeholders. With the result of this activity being 50 monitoring reports, UN agencies will produce a common methodology and framework for the CSOs to follow, allowing for a coordinated approach and mutually comparable results.

***Activity 1.1.3.3. Support the Committee for Monitoring the Implementation and Reporting on the Istanbul Convention and Femicide in BiH to develop a methodology (femicide watch/review) to monitor and analyse all femicide cases to identify challenges in the institutional response to violence and make recommendations for improved prevention.***

- Proper femicide statistics in BiH do not exist. Unless there is accurate and comparable data collection on a given crime, there will be no proper understanding of it and no effective strategy with which to combat it. In 2015, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, including its causes and consequences, called on States to establish multidisciplinary femicide watches and/or observatories and described modalities for their establishment.<sup>84</sup> Since then, a growing number have been established,<sup>85</sup> with various combinations of State agencies, CSOs and academic institutions. In 2018, UN Women, with the support of women's rights organization FemPlatz and the Women's Research Centre for Education and Communication from Serbia, started developing a framework for understanding the characteristics, patterns and causes of femicide in Serbia. The process involved developing a methodology and collecting data on final court decisions for 94 convictions for the gender-based killing of a woman by a man and 30 final enforceable decisions for attempted murder of a woman from 2015 to 2019 to analyse court proceedings, profiles of perpetrators, information about victims, prior reports of violence, qualification of the criminal act and other aspects. In addition to working with authorities on developing a femicide watch, the JP will also support gender equality institutional mechanisms in BiH in the collection and analysis of evidence, as well as evidence-based policy planning for the prevention of femicide that is in line with international standards and best practices. Due to lack of official statistics, as the media is often the first source of information when it comes to femicide, media partnerships will be established to support efforts in monitoring cases of femicide, and also to underline the need for adequate and sensitive reporting when it comes to this topic which generates a large public interest.

This activity will be implemented by UNFPA in partnership with the AGE.

<sup>84</sup> Special Rapporteur on violence against women, including its causes and consequences. 2015. A/71/398, para. 29 and 83.

<sup>85</sup> E/CN.15/2023/CRP.6, para. 45.

**Output 1.2.1. Evidence-based programmes are developed to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours:**

***Activity 1.2.1.1. Support the development of violence-prevention programming, including GBV in schools.***

- This intervention builds on a 2023 mapping conducted of existing violence-prevention programming in schools aimed at reducing the status quo of ad hoc, short-term interventions by building consensus around an approach that can be scaled up and institutionalize comprehensive violence-prevention programming in BiH schools. To prevent violence and best support children coping with challenges in their daily life, it is important to co-create solutions together with children and youth. In close collaboration with ministries of education, pedagogical institutes and students, this activity will include a consultation workshop. Evidence-based in-school interventions that have been successfully implemented in the region by UNICEF and its partners, including the “Safe to Learn” initiative, will be consulted. The consultative process will contribute to a new education policy and practices to institutionalize violence-prevention programming in BiH schools. Further, the intervention builds on UNFPA’s successful incorporation of comprehensive healthy lifestyle education programmes into high-school curricula across FBiH and RS, which address critical topics such as GBV prevention, gender equality, tolerance and acceptance. In collaboration with ministries overseeing education, UNFPA will enhance the capacity of educators to effectively impart these essential programmes.
- In terms of contents, agencies will focus on educational approaches and materials that support the transformation of gender norms and power relations. In addition to specific attention to GBV, the curricula will be revised to support learning conducive to challenging gender norms and relations, towards preventing inequalities, perceptions and behaviours that allow for violence (leveraging existing programmes of ‘Healthy lifestyles’ already introduced in high schools across BiH).

This activity will be implemented by UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women in partnership with the Ministries of Education at all levels, schools and relevant civil society organizations.

***Activity 1.2.1.2. Support the capacity-development of education professionals on awareness-raising around GBV and violence-prevention based on a methodology developed in consultation with adolescents.***

- Conduct training programmes to equip teachers and education professionals (school advisors, teachers, psychologists, social workers, pedagogues) with the necessary skills to implement the violence-prevention programme in schools. The training will include a range of practical topics to be further confirmed during consultations including social and emotional learning; knowledge and attitudes related to gender, power, gender-based violence; safe offline and online learning environments; and supporting the well-being of teachers and school staff. Engaging methodologies will be used to reflect on positive gender roles and power relations with the aim of changing the attitudes and negative behaviour of boys and men towards girls and women.
- Develop an age-appropriate toolkit with best practice resources on topics such as peer-violence-prevention, conflict-resolution, empathy, social-emotional learning, non-violent communication, and positive discipline approaches. To achieve a systemic impact, UNFPA plans to leverage its relationships with tertiary educational institutions to embed this specialized module in the curricula of pedagogical faculties, teacher training and medical studies. This will ensure that all students receiving the education at select tertiary institutions will go through these obligatory modules.

This activity will be implemented by UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP in partnership with governmental institutions, including the Ministry of Education, schools and civil society organizations.

***Activity 1.2.1.3. Advocate with educational authorities to institutionalize developed programmes into school curricula.***

- Advocate for the full integration of the developed violence prevention programme into the curricula by targeted ministries of education, leading to more sustainable and replicable models. Close monitoring

and advocacy for its full inclusion in education systems will be continuous. In consultation with education authorities, this may include an internal advocacy plan at all levels, ministerial, technical and at the school/community level.

This activity will be implemented by UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP in partnership with governmental institutions, including the Ministry of Education, schools and civil society organizations.

***Activity 1.2.1.4. Promote the community-based empowerment of Roma girls and women facing multiple forms of discrimination and GBV.***

- Issue an open call to local organizations to propose interventions to address discrimination based on gender and child marriage, including GBV, through a multisectoral approach that prioritizes adolescent girl's participation and community engagement and includes social behavioural change communication activities.<sup>86</sup> The approach will ensure that interventions are culturally sensitive and acceptable for the community and build on global and regional evidence related to harmful social norms, including child marriage. This initiative aims to establish a strong presence in Roma communities by building trust and connections with formal and informal local influencers and leaders and raising awareness and strengthening the capabilities of women and youth within the Roma community. This involves collaborating with them to identify and address local issues, such as community infrastructure, safety, housing, education and violence, particularly focusing on their impact on Roma women and girls. The project will encourage the development of practical solutions based on local activism, supported by funding and assistance from municipal governments and relevant government ministries. Achieving this level of engagement and trust will enable the project to be recognized as a legitimate and credible entity at the local level, thereby facilitating the opening of more complex and potentially contentious discussions within these communities.

This activity will be implemented by UNICEF, UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with civil society organizations and relevant institutions across BiH.

**Output 1.2.2. Media and non-traditional stakeholders (religious communities, faith-based organizations, artists, cultural workers and businesses) have increased capacity to advocate for gender-transformative norms and views around EVAWG:**

***Activity 1.2.2.1. Support the development of standards on ethical and gender-transformative reporting for media organizations and news outlets.***

- Encourage and support the media to set guidelines and self-regulatory standards to enhance ethical reporting on women and women's rights, thereby contribute to constructing gender-transformative reporting and ultimately prevent VAWG.<sup>87</sup> It will support the development of a special curriculum for higher-education institutions that train journalists. Recognizing that media entities in BiH frequently rely on content contributed by private citizens, UNFPA is preparing to launch an extensive public-awareness campaign to educate the public about the ethical violations and legal ramifications associated with the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with media, universities and civil society organizations.

***Activity 1.2.2.2. Support the training of journalists and bloggers on ethical and gender-sensitive reporting.***

<sup>86</sup> The community develops the approach to addressing social norms; publicizes change in the targeted community; builds the environment that supports new behaviours and norms; and finally, evaluates, improves and evolves based on the experience.

<sup>87</sup> As per Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention. Further resources to aid this activity are: Council of Europe. 2013. *Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality and media*; and Council of Europe. 2013. [Media and the Image of Women: Report of the 1st Conference of the Council of Europe Network of National Focal Points on Gender Equality](#), Amsterdam, p. 23.

- In 2019, UN Women designed a global tool, *The Big Conversation: Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through the Media*,<sup>88</sup> that will be used while implementing this activity. In addition, UNESCO's *Reporting on Violence against Women and Girls – A Handbook for Journalists*<sup>89</sup> and “10 essentials for gender and age-sensitive media reporting of violence against girls” described in *Mapping the nexus between media reporting of violence against girls* by UN Women and UNICEF<sup>90</sup> will inform the design of training for media representatives. UNFPA will also develop comprehensive training for media professionals, with a special emphasis on upholding the dignity of individuals within the digital realm, acknowledging the troubling trend of online threats and the sexualization of women based on their appearance, in line with its past advocacy for legislative reforms aimed at safeguarding individuals from the non-consensual distribution of intimate images in digital spaces. Curriculum development will be a collaborative effort, incorporating insights from an array of stakeholders, including journalists, editors and media experts, as well as the very women and girls who are often the subjects of digital misconduct. The training will establish standard operating procedures (SOPs) aligned with recent legislative updates, equipping journalists with the tools to not only comply with new regulations but also actively contribute to EVAWG.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with the with the BiH Regulatory Agency for Communications and public universities (Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Bihać, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Mostar and Zenica) and civil society organizations.

**Activity 1.2.2.3. Development of new and innovative models that leverage the power and influence of media and faith-based organizations in promoting narratives of zero-tolerance towards violence against women and girls (VAWG)**

- Develop and implement innovative models that utilize the reach and influence of media and faith-based organizations to promote and reinforce narratives of zero-tolerance towards violence against women and girls
- Craft a unified training programme, in partnership with the BiH Regulatory Agency for Communications, aimed at refining editorial policies across the nation's media outlets, to safeguard the dignity of women and girls, particularly in online spaces and media. This initiative will be inclusive, extending invitations to media outlets in BiH to participate.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with the BiH Regulatory Agency for Communications and faith based organizations.

**Activity 1.2.2.4 To work with faculties of journalism on the inclusion of ethical and gender-sensitive reporting into their curricula.**

- Work with faculties of journalism to embed training modules on including ethnical and gender-sensitive reporting in their curricula.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with the public universities of Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Bihać, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Mostar and Zenica.

**Activity 1.2.2.5. Work with faith-based organizations to establish standards and practices for their outreach programmes that are gender-responsive and inclusive.**

- Collaborate closely with established networks with faith-based entities and various religious communities in BiH, to formulate and adopt outreach and guidelines. The influential platforms provided

<sup>88</sup> UN Women. 2019. [The Big Conversation: Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through the Media](#).

<sup>89</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. 2019. [Reporting on Violence against Women and Girls: A Handbook for Journalists](#).

<sup>90</sup> See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/08/mapping-the-nexus-between-media-reporting-of-violence-against-girls>.

by sermons during Sunday masses in churches and Friday Jumma prayers in mosques, which serve as powerful channels to connect with hundreds of thousands of citizens weekly, will be used as strategic avenues to advocate for inclusion, prevent violence and foster gender equality and equitable perspectives.

- hEngage with central authorities to establish guidelines that incorporate gender-transformative elements into sermons and deliver specialized training for at least 300 clergy members, empowering them with the knowledge and skills to convey messages that can catalyse positive change in attitudes towards gender roles and equality within their congregations. This effort is part of a broader goal to tap into respected voices in religious communities as catalysts for social transformation.
- To ensure that faith-based organizations don't operate in an ideological silo, UN agencies will strive to build partnerships between human-rights oriented CSOs and religious communities. This will contribute to a broad consensus to challenge religious-related threats to women, especially women human rights defenders.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with human-rights CSOs, WCSOs, faith-based communities and various religious communities in BiH.

***Activity 1.2.2.6. Implement the CTC prevention programme in select municipalities to equip communities with the tools to raise-awareness around GBV.***

- The Institute for Population and Development in collaboration with UN Women implemented a comprehensive Community That Cares (CTC) prevention programme across six local communities in BiH in 2020–2023. The CTC programme is a community-based initiative designed to prevent youth problem behaviours and promote positive development through structured community engagement and evidence-based practices. By involving local stakeholders, families, and youth, the program aims to create safer and healthier communities. To sustain and expand the results achieved by this initiative, UN Women will continue implementing the CTC prevention strategy and develop tools to evaluate the effectiveness of the methodology, build the capacities of multi-sectoral teams, conduct research on local norms, organize coordination meetings, improve the capacities of targeted sectors, conduct evaluations, map effective practices and develop a registry of organizations with expertise in preventing and responding to violence. It will involve sharing practices with new communities, organizing conferences for knowledge-exchange, engaging religious communities and developing an online hub, while advocating with relevant authorities for the allocation of funds for ongoing capacity-building and long-term sustainability.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women in partnership with relevant civil society organizations.

***Activity 1.2.2.7. Implement the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls initiative in two selected cities of BiH.***

- The Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls initiative is one of UN Women's global initiatives, engaging women's organizations, local and national governments, UN agencies and other partners to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive approaches to prevent and respond to sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces in different settings. This multi-stakeholder initiative has grown to include more than 50 cities and continues to achieve positive results with its partners.
- In BiH, UN Women initiated a prevention programme focusing on sexual harassment and violence in public spaces, using methodologies from the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces initiative. A rapid assessment in six cities led to Banja Luka being chosen as the pilot city. A significant result of the United Women Banjaluka Foundation's work on enhancement of the legislative framework and institutional response to VAW have led to recognition of the Foundation as one of the key actors in this field by national and more importantly local stakeholders.



- While significant progress has been made in raising awareness and improving responses to sexual violence, further efforts are needed to effectively address these issues across BiH. Expansion of the programme to other cities, alongside continued support for regulatory improvements and local initiatives, will be crucial in achieving safer public spaces and reducing sexual harassment and violence against women and girls in BiH.
- UN Women will expand the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces programme to other cities in BiH based on various factors, including identifying neighbourhoods with high levels of violence, political commitment to gender equality, local needs and context, existing support services for women victims of gender-based violence, motivation and interest, and willingness to financially support the initiative from the local public budget in the medium-to-long term.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women in partnership with CSOs and local governments.

***Activity 1.2.2.8. Support the capacity-development of adolescent- and youth-led organizations to address harmful social norms that perpetuate violence against women and violence against children.***

- Adolescent- and youth-led organizations will receive training to improve their knowledge of, and capacity to, address harmful social norms that contribute to violence. Young people will bring creative, innovative approaches to changing social norms and their engagement is critical to a rights-based approach to addressing VAW and VAC. To engage this demographic more effectively, UNFPA is initiating a strategic partnership with youth councils, including those in BD, in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The aim is to create outreach initiatives, capacity-building and youth-centric campaigns designed and led by young people themselves. To ensure that this intervention is sustained, UNFPA will be partnering with Youth Councils across both entities and in Brcko District, to ensure that Roma engagement modules and approaches will be institutionalized and transformed into their regular operations.
- This will provide youth with the tools and platforms to actively participate in and advocate for issues affecting their lives. Public voluntary events will be organized to engage communities directly, while social media platforms will be employed to amplify the campaigns and connect with a broader audience. Moreover, UNFPA will foster innovative approaches by partnering with media outlets and IT companies to develop cutting-edge solutions that resonate with and empower youth. This activity will be done by UNFPA and UNICEF, building upon the existing successes and expertise in relation to Roma community engagement and education (community liaison points, Roma-sensitive education modules in schools, etc.)

This activity will be implemented by UNFPA and UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and relevant civil society organizations.

***Activity 1.2.2.9. Empower community and adolescent girl-led initiatives to address violence against women and girls (VAWG) by fostering social behavior change and inclusive community engagement, particularly among marginalized groups such as the Roma***

- Cultivate and support community and adolescent girl-led initiatives that foster narratives and actions towards zero-tolerance of violence against women and girls
- This intervention will be co-designed with adolescent girls and community members in five locations, with a focus on the current and future priorities of the target population related to VAWG. The community (adolescent girls and boys, parents, leaders) will be informed, consulted and involved in addressing the behaviours the JP seeks to change, with community meetings, workshops and methods developed with and for the community to ensure the involvement of different groups, especially the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups.
- The community will be supported to develop systems for social and behavioural change, establish and set priorities, implement interventions and develop sustainable mechanisms for development with partners, as part of a support network (for example, also engaging local influencers or community



leaders to showcase desirable behaviours and attitudes, forum theatre as a regular occurrence in local culture centre, etc.)

- This intervention will specifically target communities facing multiple deprivations, such as Roma communities. Although the focus is on cultivating girl-centric strategies that challenge and change harmful societal norms contributing to VAWG, the initiative will broaden its scope to include boys and men to dismantle the misconception that gender-based issues are solely women's responsibility and foster collective accountability and action. Furthermore, the activity commits to elevating the role of Roma girls, not only as beneficiaries of change but as influential agents and leaders within their communities, to reshape the narrative around Roma individuals, away from being mere members of an ethnic minority to being recognized as empowered contributors to societal progress.

This activity will be implemented by UNFPA and UNICEF in partnership with civil society organizations including the ones working with youth and marginalized groups like the Roma community.

**Output 1.3.1. Relevant government institutions and women's rights organizations at all levels have better knowledge and capacity to deliver quality and coherent essential services that are adjusted to the diverse needs of women and girls:**

***Activity 1.3.1.1. Conduct country-wide assessment on the implementation of Laws on Protection from Domestic Violence (including the provision of specialized services) and support implementation of key recommendations for improvement of capacities of Safe Houses and helplines for women and children) to provide comprehensive support to survivors (immediate care and support – establishing referral links with public institutions – long-term support for survivors and their families).***

- To begin, this activity will start with agencies conduct a mapping of all available services, evaluating their compliance with the Istanbul Convention and looking at intersections and referral pathways among the different service streams to support the authorities of BiH in further strengthening service-provision to VAWG survivors. This will help to advance GREVIO recommendations that encourage BiH authorities to support the development of alternative low-threshold support services for all forms of VAW, beyond domestic violence, based on a victim-centred and empowering approach, in addition to State-run services, relying on the long-standing expertise and experience of women's NGOs.<sup>91</sup> The methodology for the exercise will be guided by the Council of Europe's *Mapping Support Services for Victims of Violence against Women in Line with the Istanbul Convention Standards, Methodology and Tools*.<sup>92</sup> The findings of the mapping will inform further programming to strengthen service-provision.
- Along with the mapping conduct an exhaustive assessment of the implementation of domestic violence laws across Bosnia and Herzegovina, including both entities and Brčko District, aiming to enhance legal and financial support for Safe Houses and improve the overall response to domestic violence in alignment with international standards
- Collaborate with health-care line ministries to bolster the capacity of medical professionals across the board, from nurses to specialists. This initiative is multi-faceted and will focus on: training medical staff to identify signs of violence and understand the nuances of care required by survivors; equipping health-care-providers with the skills to offer essential, timely care and psychological support for those impacted by violence; and enabling practitioners to guide survivors to necessary lateral services, including legal, welfare and security support systems, as well as connections to women's shelters for holistic care.
- Support the implementation of SOPs with respective line ministries, in no less than 56 public health centres, aiming for uniformity and quality in service-delivery, and establish interlinkages between health-care-providers, social welfare providers and justice institutions, including public health centres, CSWs, CMHs and the judicial system. These interventions will be integrated into a singular,

<sup>91</sup> GREVIO. 2022. [\(Baseline\) Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence \(Istanbul Convention\), Bosnia and Herzegovina](#).

<sup>92</sup> CoE. 2018. [Mapping support services for victims of violence against women in line with the Istanbul Convention standards, methodology and tools](#).

comprehensive support mechanism for survivors (localized to the level of city/municipality), ensuring uniform, unified and comparable level of support to survivors. This network will foster a seamless continuum of care, facilitating the efficient transfer of information, case management and referrals. The overarching goal is to provide survivors with comprehensive, uninterrupted support throughout their recovery journey.

- Provide technical assistance to respective stakeholders with generic SOPs for VAWG cases for each stakeholder (with planned localization in at least 56 public health centres). As social policy ministries in both entities have identified supervision as a gap and priority in strengthening the social welfare capacities to respond to protection issues, the practice will be institutionalized in partnership with University of Banja Luka and University of Sarajevo with the aim to establish a master's degree and specialist's training. This activity will also advocate for the inclusion of budget allocations to support supervision for individuals involved in case management, ensuring that duty bearers prioritize this aspect in their planning and budgeting processes. Entity line ministries in RS and FBiH have committed to further institutionalize the practice throughout CSWs in BiH, once finalized.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in partnership with respective ministries, public universities across BiH, health-care providers, social services and civil society organizations.

#### ***Activity 1.3.1.2. Support the establishment of a pilot Barnahus model in Sarajevo.***

- Barnahus is the leading European response model for child sexual abuse and victims of crime. Its unique inter-agency approach brings together all relevant services under one roof to avoid re-victimization of the child and provide every child with a coordinated and effective response that has a legal standing. The core purpose of Barnahus is to coordinate parallel criminal and child welfare investigations and provide support services for child victims and witnesses of violence in a child-friendly and safe environment. Developed initially in Iceland in 1998, this model has proven its success: it is estimated that twice as many cases of suspected child sexual abuse have been investigated, three times as many cases have been prosecuted and the number of convictions has doubled in Iceland since the establishment of Barnahus. BiH authorities have taken steps towards a more effective child protection framework by undertaking legislative and policy interventions and adjusting the justice system for children victims and witnesses of crimes (i.e., the law on protection of children in criminal proceedings has introduced much better protection of child witness and victims of violence by mandating child friendly-interviewing procedures with certified professionals and child-friendly rooms). Implementing the Barnahus model in Canton Sarajevo is a step further in this process and will provide an integrated support to children victims and witnesses of violence.

This activity will be implemented by UNICEF in partnership with Canton Sarajevo.

#### ***Activity 1.3.1.3. Support capacity-development of the judiciary, prosecution and police systems to ensure efficient handling of VAWG cases.***

- The primary goal is to support extension of capacities of the judiciary, prosecution and police systems in handling cases of VAWG.
- This will be initiated by assessing the extent to which gender biases may affect the institutional responses and the overall effectiveness of their interventions, including coherency between sectors, consistency in applying the existing legislation and uniformity of approach in relation to marginalized or otherwise discriminated groups.
- Scope of work:
  - Review existing procedures and protocols used by the judiciary, prosecution and police systems for handling VAWG cases. This will involve gathering data on the number of cases reported, response times, resolution rates and satisfaction levels of survivors with the process. The programme will cover the past four years, including COVID lockdowns and the last two years of a 'return to normalcy,' to provide a comprehensive overview of the period.

- Conduct qualitative and quantitative research to identify any gender biases that influence case outcomes. This will include interviews, focus groups and surveys with stakeholders within these systems as well as survivors of VAWG.
  - Assess the current training programmes in place for the judiciary, prosecution and police to determine their adequacy in addressing VAWG and educating personnel on gender sensitivity and bias.
  - Engage with various stakeholders including CSOs, women's groups, and international experts on gender and law enforcement to gather insights and recommendations, ensuring that they both receive support for monitoring, including additional technical know-how allowing them to be able to continue doing it even after the JP winds down.
  - Based on the findings, develop a set of actionable recommendations aimed at improving the capacity of the judiciary, prosecution and police to handle VAWG cases more effectively and without gender bias.
- Support authorities of BiH in further strengthening police responses to VAWG/DV survivors in line with GREVIO recommendations urging BiH authorities to provide initial and in-service training, guidelines, and protocols based on the findings and recommendations from needs assessments for all police officers on all forms of VAWG, and to set up adequately staffed and dedicated units to receive, investigate and prosecute cases of VAWG and domestic violence.<sup>93</sup>
  - Provide training on gender-based violence through teams of trainers-of-trainers (building internal capacities for institutional, self-driven capacity-development), including domestic and sexual violence against women for commanding officers and managers of police units across BiH. These trainings will be institutionalized as part of police training across BiH.
  - Partner with relevant Ministries of Interior to enhance their capabilities, enabling them to handle VAWG cases more effectively and efficiently. The collaboration aims to streamline procedures, reduce bureaucratic barriers and improve the overall responsiveness of the justice and security sectors. This intervention will happen across three pillars: 1) training staff within justice and security institutions to recognize and respond appropriately to cases of violence, ensuring that they understand the complexities involved in supporting survivors (including building ToT programmes and pools of trainers, to ensure continuous replicability of knowledge from within the institution itself; 2) equipping personnel with the ability to provide or facilitate immediate and comprehensive assistance, including legal aid and protective services; 3) creating a system where survivors can be seamlessly directed to health-care services, ensuring that their physical and psychological needs are promptly addressed.
  - Ensure that all methodologies employed in the research and evaluation components undergo review by an Ethics Review Committee. This external review will align with best practices for research involving human subjects, particularly survivors of violence, ensuring ethical integrity and safeguarding their rights.
  - Incorporate rigorous ethical guidelines to protect the wellbeing of survivors throughout the data collection and evaluation processes. Measures will be implemented to prevent re-traumatization, including the use of trauma-informed approaches and ensuring confidentiality, consent, and sensitivity during all interactions.
  - To guarantee consistent and effective application of these protocols, UNDP will advocate for the adoption of SOPs across justice and security institutions, seeking to achieve a standard of uniform service-delivery in conjunction with UNFPA, which will do the same across health-care-providers and UNICEF the same within the social welfare sector. By establishing horizontal linkages between justice, security, health care and social welfare institutions, the partnership aims to create a cohesive network that enables the smooth transition of survivors between services. This integrated approach aims to ensure that survivors receive comprehensive and uninterrupted support, from the initial response by

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<sup>93</sup> GREVIO. 2022, para 279.

justice or security personnel to the full spectrum of healthcare and child-protection services, facilitating a holistic recovery journey.

- Develop guidelines on risk assessment and risk management outlining a common approach for use by police officers across BiH, including their adoption and inclusion into Standard Operating Procedures, improving their enforceability and sustainability.

This activity will be implemented by UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women in partnership with the relevant ministries, healthcare and child protection services, and civil society organizations.

***Activity 1.3.1.4. Develop pilot training for the Centres for Social Welfare on VAWG, case management, risk assessment, identifying multiple forms of violence, survivor- and child-friendly responses and roll-out training across BiH.***

- Organize an initial workshop to identify the key gaps, needs and proposed way forward in six pilot locations., building upon the experience generated by women's CSOs such as Udružne (Banja Luka), but others as well. Capacity-building of CSWs, as well as the development of relevant SOPs and tools, will support a holistic, child- and survivor-centred approach to addressing VAWG, to be rolled out in six locations. The approach will be tested and revised if needed, with the aim to ultimately scale it up through adoption of the approach at entity/district level.

This activity will be implemented by UNICEF, UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with key line ministries of social welfare at entity/district, canton levels, as well as with CSWs at the municipal level. At the same time, this activity will be seeking partnerships with CSOs at the local level that are engaged in case management and work with CSWs both in terms of welfare reform, and support to marginalized groups.

***Activity 1.3.1.5. Engage with the hotline for children to provide access to information related to GBV and essential services and support capacity-development of hotline operators in support to GBV survivors and training on interlinkages between VAW and VAC.***

- In BiH, the most widely used children's helpline is the Bluephone. UNICEF is working on strengthening the Blue Phone Helpline services for children and strengthening referrals with CSWs, CMHs, police and other community-based services. These efforts aim to enable young people to access mental health and psychosocial support services in person, online or through phone consultations. Workforce professionals are trained in new modalities to provide child and family remote protection services, including mental health and psychosocial support services. Support will focus on strengthening the capacity of Helpline professionals and child protection professionals to provide specific GBV support and advice, including the reporting of GBV cases to the authorities. A training programme is envisaged to provide Blue Phone with ToT materials, allowing them to continue expanding their capacities even in the face of expected staff-turnover or changes in the team composition. Adolescent girls and boys will be consulted in the development of training materials and will provide feedback on the delivery of services, to further improve the approach.

This activity will be implemented by UNICEF in partnership with key line ministries of social welfare at entity/district, canton levels, as well as with CSWs at the municipal level.

***Activity 1.3.1.6. Advocate for the sustainability of child Helpline in line with Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations.***

- While the existing Blue Phone Helpline is well recognized by the authorities and has potential to access government funding, the service requires external support for the next 2–3 years. In parallel, UNICEF, the BiH Council for Children and partners have initiated a mapping of the need for a sustainable solution of establishing a State-owned child helpline with secured government funding. This will require advocacy and facilitation of close collaboration between the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, Ministry of Communications and Transport and the Regulatory Agency for Communications. Advocacy and follow-

up for the establishment of a State-owned helpline will be part of all related workshops, events, technical and high-level meetings with the ministries and decision-makers.

This activity will be implemented by UNICEF in partnership with key line ministries of social welfare at entity/district, canton levels, and with CSWs at the municipal level.

***Activity 1.3.1.7. Support standardization and alignment of approaches, policies, practices and capacities among public service delivery institutions (justice, welfare, healthcare, safety and security) focused on survivor-centered response to violence against women and girls and accessibility by marginalized groups (including Roma)***

- Standardized and aligned approaches, policies, practices, and capacities of public service delivery institutions across critical sectors (justice, welfare, healthcare, safety, and security) to ensure survivor-centered responses to VAWG, with a specific focus on improving accessibility for marginalized groups, including Roma communities
- Public service delivery institutions are crucial in addressing VAWG, yet disparities in policies, practices, and capacities across sectors often result in inconsistent and inadequate support for survivors. This initiative seeks to eliminate these gaps by developing standardized approaches that guarantee a comprehensive, interconnected, and sustained level of care and assistance for survivors, particularly those from marginalized communities. Enhancing the technical skills of service providers and adhering to improved standard operating procedures (SOPs) are vital for ensuring that survivors receive the necessary support across all sectors.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in partnership with respective ministries, health-care providers, social services and civil society organizations.

**Output 1.3.2: Survivors of GBV have increased information and access to coordinated, multisectoral and essential services:**

***Activity 1.3.2.1. Promote existing care, support and protection mechanisms and services for VAWG broad groups of survivors.***

- Launch targeted awareness campaigns focused on educating survivors, women and girls about the legal protections available to them. This corresponds to the challenge that in BiH, a significant number of survivors, particularly women and girls, remain unaware of their rights and the available support, as evidenced by the surveys showing that only 5% of women who have experienced GBV seek help or assistance. One of the primary reasons for this gap is the insufficient dissemination of information about existing support. Initiate media partnerships to support this goal, and report on available protection mechanisms to survivors, particularly taking into account different types of violence and its specificities.
- Advocate for and promote the legal support systems provided by public sector entities and CSOs, including services like free legal aid, victim/witness support and counselling.
- Also, ensure that this activity truly leaves no one behind (LNOB principle) by partnering with CSOs, formal and informal groups that target marginalized or otherwise discriminated or underrepresented groups (rural, disabilities, minorities, etc.)

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

***Activity 1.3.2.2. Support the development of government-funded single points of information (online platform) for survivors of VAWG regarding all available services, entitlements and benefits.***

- The current architecture for VAWG prevention, protection and rehabilitation in the country is complex and often not user-friendly, creating a barrier for survivors who seek information on services, benefits,

entitlements and protections. To address this issue, a collaborative effort involving UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP, gender equality mechanisms, line ministries, civil society and local governments is proposed. The aim is to develop a clear, comprehensive and accessible guide for survivors. This guide will provide step-by-step instructions on how to access the services, entitlements and protections available to them. To make this fully inclusive, the project will ensure that contents are provided in a way that is accommodating to different types of disabilities (agencies will also test them with women's CSOs and associations of persons with disabilities). It will also include educational resources to help survivors recognize signs of violence against them or those in their community. This initiative seeks to streamline the process for survivors to find help, making it as straightforward and transparent as possible. By doing so, the goal is to empower women and girls with the necessary tools and information to navigate the system effectively, ensuring that they have immediate and comprehensive access to the support they require. UNFPA will be responsible for collecting, collating and merging all available information on services, benefits and entitlements, and UNDP will be responsible for packaging the information in user-friendly way. UNICEF will provide technical inputs to ensure coherence with efforts to address violence against children.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

***Activity 1.3.2.3. Support the increased access of Roma girls and women facing multiple forms of discrimination to existing public services.***

- Strengthen cooperation with relevant municipal services by engaging mediators to identify children at risk and child victims of abuse/neglect/violence/exploitation and provide direct support and/or referrals to CSWs and other protection services. Capacity-building will focus on including vulnerable groups and anti-bias training.
- Promote partnerships with universities in both entities for pre-service training and further integration of these topics into university curricula.
- Expanding on the outcomes of Activity 1.2.1.4., utilize the connections, presence and trust achieved through advocacy addressing urgent community needs. The goal is to initiate wide-ranging public discussions and mobilization campaigns that challenge and seek to change the deep-seated values and norms perpetuating misogyny and VAWG. Direct advocacy actions will be spearheaded by women and girls, aimed at public institutions, focusing on demanding fair treatment and equal access to services, benefits and entitlements. This approach is designed to ensure that the needs and rights of women and girls are recognized and met by these institutions. This activity will support Roma women and girls in advocating for changes in policies, procedures and practices that currently govern service-delivery and act as barriers to access, and in awareness-raising among service-providers. The objective is to work collaboratively with these providers to decrease the stigmatization of minorities and to enhance the effectiveness of services provided. This dual approach aims to not only change institutional policies and practices but also to positively influence the attitudes and behaviours of those who deliver these services.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNFPA, and UNICEF in partnership with civil society organization and respective stakeholders.

***Activity 1.3.2.4. Strengthen the Capacities of Relevant Public Institutions to Develop and Implement Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Supporting Entrepreneurship***

- Develop and implement Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) across relevant institutions (labor ministries and employment bureaus) to enhance support for entrepreneurship, particularly focusing on integrating gender-sensitive approaches and streamlining processes for entrepreneurs, employers, and governmental institutions.



- Strengthening the institutional framework is essential to foster an environment supportive of entrepreneurship, especially for marginalized women and girls. Many institutions like Bureaus for Employment and line ministries currently lack standardized protocols that integrate gender-sensitive practices. By developing SOPs and providing targeted training, this initiative seeks to empower women through economic opportunities and enhance institutional effectiveness in supporting entrepreneurship.

This activity will be implemented by UNFPA in partnership with Bureaus for Employment, Ministry of Economy at cantonal level; Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (FBIH), and Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports (RS)

***Activity 1.3.2.5. Identify business niche for social entrepreneurship of survivors of violence and human trafficking***

- Conduct thorough market analyses to identify viable business niches for social enterprises focused on the economic empowerment of survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking.
- Establishing a supportive ecosystem for social entrepreneurship is crucial for ensuring that businesses not only function effectively but also succeed in supporting survivors of gender-based violence. Identifying viable business niches is a key component of this ecosystem, allowing social enterprises to align with market opportunities and meaningfully contribute to the support and empowerment of survivors.

This activity will be implemented by UNFPA in partnership with social enterprises.

***Activity 1.3.2.6. Incubation and acceleration Programs: Develop structured programs that provide budding survivor and survivor-focused entrepreneurs with resources like business plan development, access to funding, legal and financial advice, and networking opportunities.***

- Emerging survivors and survivor-focused entrepreneurs provided with comprehensive resources and support for business development, including business plan creation, access to funding, legal and financial advice, and networking opportunities, to enhance their capacity for sustainable growth.
- Many social enterprises are nascent and face challenges related to financial and technical preparedness for sustainable growth. They often lack access to critical technical skills for strategic development, market orientation, branding, and investment planning. Developing a robust support ecosystem for social entrepreneurship and identifying viable business niches are essential to ensure these enterprises not only function but thrive, thereby effectively supporting survivors of gender-based violence.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with social enterprises.

***Activity 1.3.2.7. Grant making to select enterprises (grants provided to social enterprises, for the purpose of economic empowerment of victim of domestic violence and human trafficking)***

- To provide targeted financial support through grants to enterprises and initiatives focused on the economic empowerment of survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.
- The economic empowerment of survivors is crucial for their recovery and integration into society. By providing grants to diverse enterprises, the initiative aims to bolster existing social enterprises, encourage the establishment of socially responsible businesses, and support survivors in launching their own ventures. This multifaceted strategy leverages various opportunities for economic independence and support.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with social enterprises and civil society organizations.



**Output 1.4.1: Expert CSO service-providers deliver more comprehensive and sustainable services and advocacy for women and girls, resulting from enhanced access to flexible and sustainable funding.**

***Activity 1.4.1.1: Establish a Multi-Year Grant Program***

- To effectively assess the impact of funding on CSOs involved in gender equality, agencies will develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation framework that includes indicators for service delivery and sustainability. This framework will utilize diverse data collection tools such as surveys and focus groups, with regular monitoring and detailed evaluation reports to inform adjustments. Concurrently, agencies will commission research to document the repercussions of the anti-gender backlash on women and gender equality, using a blend of literature reviews, field studies, and stakeholder interviews. The insights gained will be pivotal in crafting targeted advocacy strategies and policy recommendations, while also supporting public awareness campaigns to mitigate these impacts.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

***Activity 1.4.1.2: Capacity Building for CSO Financial Sustainability***

- Enhance the financial sustainability of CSOs through four targeted training sessions. These workshops aim to equip CSOs with essential skills in fundraising, financial management, donor engagement, and sustainability strategies. The sessions will cover innovative fundraising techniques, effective financial practices, building strong donor relationships, and strategic planning for long-term sustainability. Each quarterly session is designed to be interactive, involving case studies and practical exercises, targeting financial officers and senior managers from CSOs. This initiative will empower organizations to better manage resources, engage with donors effectively, and develop robust strategies to ensure their ongoing viability and impact in promoting gender equality.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

***Activity 1.4.1.3: Support for Innovative Funding Models***

- Expand and stabilize financial support for CSOs by developing and piloting innovative funding mechanisms. This initiative, led by UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF in collaboration with CSOs and relevant stakeholders, will explore new models to diversify funding sources. The focus will be on creating sustainable funding streams that leverage both traditional and non-traditional funding opportunities, ensuring long-term viability and greater financial independence for CSOs. This strategic approach is designed to empower organizations to access a broader range of financial resources, enhancing their ability to fulfill their missions effectively.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

***Activity 1.4.1.4: Advocacy for Increased Government Funding***

- Launch coordinated policy dialogues and advocacy campaign aimed at securing increased government funding for CSO service providers, emphasizing the importance of sustainable and flexible financing.
- Enhance the predictable financial support structure for CSOs by launching a series of coordinated policy dialogues and advocacy campaigns. This initiative, jointly led by UN Women and UNICEF in collaboration with CSOs and relevant stakeholders, seeks to secure increased government funding. The focus is on advocating for sustainable and flexible financing options that will support the critical services provided by CSOs. This strategic advocacy effort aims to engage government bodies in meaningful discussions that underscore the vital role of CSOs in service provision and advocacy against gender-backlash and the need for robust financial backing.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNICEF in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

#### ***Activity 1.4.1.5: Monitoring and Evaluation of Funding Impact, including Research and Evidence Generation***

- Develop and implement monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact of the financing on service delivery and sustainability of CSOs; Commission research to document the impact of the anti-gender backlash on women and gender equality and use findings to inform advocacy efforts.
- Assess and enhance the effectiveness of funding for CSOs through a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework. Implemented by UNDP and UNICEF, in collaboration with CSOs and stakeholders, this activity will evaluate the impact of financial support on service delivery and the sustainability of CSOs. Additionally, commission research to document the effects of anti-gender backlash on women and gender equality, using the findings to bolster advocacy efforts. This dual approach ensures that funding is not only effective but also adaptively responds to the challenges faced by women and CSOs in a changing socio-political landscape.

This activity will be implemented by UNDP and UNICEF in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

#### ***Activity 1.4.1.6 Public Awareness Campaign***

- Develop and launch public awareness campaign that promotes positive narratives about gender equality, challenges stereotypes, and debunks myths propagated by anti-gender movements.
- Bolster public understanding and support for gender equality through a robust public awareness campaign. Led by UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF in collaboration with CSOs and other stakeholders, this campaign will develop and disseminate positive narratives that promote gender equality, challenge entrenched stereotypes, and counteract the myths perpetuated by anti-gender movements.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

#### ***Activity 1.4.1.7 Capacity Building for CSOs on Strategic Communication***

- Provide training for CSOs on strategic communication, including how to effectively counter anti-gender narratives, engage with the media, and use social media for advocacy.
- Enhance the communication capabilities of CSOs through targeted training in strategic communication. Implemented by UN Women in collaboration with CSOs and various stakeholders, this training will equip participants with skills to effectively counter anti-gender narratives, engage with media, and utilize social media for advocacy purposes. The goal is to empower CSOs to more effectively communicate their message, influence public opinion, and advocate for gender equality through diverse communication platforms.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

#### ***Activity 1.4.1.8 Coalition Building and Networking***

- This initiative harnesses the UNDP-led Women Forum for Development and the UN Women-led Human Rights Defenders platforms to foster a coalition of CSOs, gender equality advocates, and allied organizations. The coalition aims to coordinate efforts, share resources, and amplify voices against anti-gender backlash, utilizing strategic planning, extensive engagement, and resource pooling. By crafting unified messages and coordinating advocacy campaigns, the coalition seeks to influence policy and engage the public effectively. The platforms serve as catalysts for joint actions, ensuring a sustainable impact in promoting gender equality and countering negative narratives.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNICEF in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

#### ***Activity 1.4.1.9: Engagement with Policy Makers, Academia, Influencers, Religious Leaders***

- Broadening support for gender equality through strategic engagement with key societal influencers. This activity, orchestrated by UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF in collaboration with CSOs and other stakeholders, involves organizing targeted advocacy efforts to connect with policymakers, academia, influencers, and religious leaders utilizing a mix of traditional and new media, and both in-person, and virtual events.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

#### **Activity 1.4.1.10: Legal Support for CSOs Facing Backlash**

- Provide essential legal support to CSOs and activists targeted by anti-gender movements. Implemented by UN Women and UNDP in partnership with CSOs and other stakeholders, this initiative offers legal representation, advice, and assistance to those facing Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP), defamation, and other legal challenges.
- Leverage collaboration with specialized legal firms and human rights lawyers, the activity includes organizing capacity-building workshops to educate CSOs on legal rights and navigating judicial challenges effectively.
- Additionally, an emergency legal response team will be established to provide immediate support, ensuring that CSOs and activists can continue their advocacy work without legal impediments.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNDP in partnership with CSOs and respective stakeholders.

### **Transformative Impact Area 2: EMPOWERING women economically**

To ensure that women and girls have increased access to decent work and entrepreneurship opportunities, increased economic autonomy and can benefit from resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth, in line with SDGs 5 and 8, UNSDCF Outcome 1, and GAP Priority Areas 1.3 and 3.2, this strategic accelerator will advance the following results and partnerships:

**Output 2.1.1: Relevant stakeholders (institutions, CSOs, academia) have increased capacities to strengthen regulatory frameworks and policies on women's economic empowerment through transforming the care economy and furthering the implementation and monitoring of family-friendly policies:**

#### **Activity 2.1.1.1. Develop studies and evidence and provide expert advice.**

- Produce research and evidence on the following four topics: 1) Understanding unemployment of women, in particular collecting qualitative data from inactive women participants in the study to analyse what services would make them active again in the job-market, not focusing on the reasons why they are currently inactive, but rather the actions that would change that trend, while proposing a set of results-oriented and transformative policies and gender-responsive approaches that tackle populations inactive in the labour market, taking into account an intersectional lens and relying on LNOB principles; 2) the economic impact of unpaid care work and a baseline for paid care work; 3) labour demand and supply and the employment of long-term unemployed and inactive women and men; and 4) developing care economy policies and programmes. This will include both market research to understand business sector perspectives and a household survey on women and men's in-depth perceptions. The research aims to better target beneficiaries and highlight the most effective strategies to create an enabling environment for women's participation in the workforce and men's participation in the care economy. The studies will build on the Baseline Study on Care Economy and Gender Equality Barometer and inform the steps in the transformation of the unpaid care work into paid work.

This activity will be supported jointly by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women and implemented in close collaboration with economic institutes in FBiH and RS, academia, AGE, Gender Centres in RS and FBiH, and others.

**Activity 2.1.1.2. Revise laws and policies to support the implementation and scale-up of care economy models.**

- Support government authorities and other relevant partners to increase the number of legal, regulatory and policy frameworks aligned with international standards that foster decent work environments for women and men and enhance the capacity of various institutions to improve the availability of essential services, goods and resources, ultimately impacting the shift in gender norms.
- Assess existing policy frameworks relevant to specialized foster care and respite care and review laws and legal frameworks relevant to these alternative care options. This will include: a demand scan of care options, needs and opportunities; information on the level of awareness among social-service workforce professionals in child protection; and current and emerging capacity gaps and needs (with a focus on capacity needs for specialized foster care and respite care, and the preparation of plans for further professional development/specialized training/expertise and demand), upon which the preferred format of further service-delivery can be tailored. This activity will cover a representative number of social-service professionals in the country. Based on the knowledge produced, the goal is to create and implement transformative care economy policies with a multi-stakeholder approach for systemic and sustainable changes that recognize, reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care work.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UNICEF and UN Women in close collaboration with governmental institutions, private sector, CSOs and academia.

**Activity 2.1.1.3. Policy dialogues and advocacy promote the newly available evidence with key stakeholders, decision-makers and business leaders, with a focus on operationalizing recommendations.**

- Disseminate the evidence gathered under activity 2.1.1.1 through UNFPA-organized dialogues targeting 100 policymakers and government stakeholders and conduct a localized campaign on social and traditional media targeting up to 500,000 beneficiaries from the public.
- Engage with stakeholders, policymakers and the general public to promote awareness, understanding and support for policy changes or improvements in policies related to care, specifically in areas such as ECCE, specialized foster care and respite care and advocate for policymakers to increase budget allocations and subsidies to expand preschool enrolment, underscoring the socioeconomic benefits of increased preschool enrolment. Advocacy will be anchored in evidence from the aforementioned UNICEF Investment Cases for Children study, which estimates the returns of investments in preschool education, such as increased participation of women in the labour market. This evidence will also be used to mobilize various BiH executive and legislative authorities to provide co-funding incentives to plan and implement preschool sector expansion.
- Support the Government to revisit preschool enrolment criteria, emphasizing adjustments that align better with the needs of women to access the labour market. The policy dialogues will be enhanced by technical assistance for amending the design of new/existing regulatory frameworks that enable the structural enhancement of social services for women. Advocacy may also include organizing campaigns, lobbying policymakers, partnering with the business sector and engaging with the media to amplify the voices of those affected by the gap in these care services. Activities will also involve building dialogue and partnerships with relevant organizations, experts and community members to strengthen the collective impact of advocacy initiatives.
- The work on development of the care economy will be reflected under BiH commitments under the Global Care Alliance – a global shared space for exchanging best practices and knowledge and promoting the development of the care economy.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women and UNICEF in partnership with government institutions, private sector organizations and CSOs.

***Activity 2.1.1.4. Leverage the Action Coalition for Economic Justice and Rights, as well as the Women Forum for Development's Decent Work and Care Economy tracks, to strengthen the agency of women leaders to deliver on targeted gender equality outcomes in the areas of decent work, the care economy and social innovation and to advocate for changes in laws and practices in socioeconomic priority areas***

- Leverage UN Women's Generation Equality Action Coalition for Economic Justice and Rights, and the Women Forum for Development to strengthen policy advocacy and the agency of women leaders to deliver on targeted gender equality outcomes in the areas of decent work, the care economy and social innovation and to advocate for changes in laws and practices in socioeconomic priority areas. The Action Coalition is an innovative, multi-stakeholder partnership platform aimed at mobilizing government, civil society and the private sector to catalyze collective action; spark local conversations among generations; drive increased public and private investment and deliver concrete, game-changing results for girls and women. The Women Forum for Development (WF4D) is a networking platform for 1,800 women leaders, civil society members, activists, women grassroots, experts, practitioners, and academia who use the network to plan, take joint action and make their voice heard. This platform operates across 4 issue coalitions: Decent Work, Transformative Leadership, Care Economy/Social Innovation and Knowledge Powerhouse, empowering women leaders to take concrete measures for the positive transformation of their communities and social sector systems.
- Both of the networking platforms are open to all the grass-roots initiatives and for the involvement of CSOs, academia, informal groups and individual experts.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women and UNDP in partnership with government institutions, the private sector and CSOs.

**Output 2.1.2: Relevant institutions, CSOs and the private sector have increased capacities and resources for the implementation of selected care economy models:**

***Activity 2.1.2.1. Assess the needs for social services and potential of service-providers in select municipalities, including CSOs, to close the service gap and generate know-how.***

- This activity will assess: a) types of de-institutionalized services (such as day centres for older people, children and people with disabilities, respite care, specialized foster care, etc.); b) feasibility and financing of care models (blended finance models, public private partnership, etc.); c) institutional cooperation models for service-provision (e.g. CSOs, CSOs in cooperation with CSWs, private sector/industrial zones in cooperation with municipalities, etc.); and d) the capacity to access public services, grants and funds.
- Research and analysis will seek to understand the current needs and challenges in service-provision, with a needs assessment to identify the demand for respite care services and the specific requirements of caregivers and individuals in need of respite. This includes determining the scope of services, defining eligibility criteria and establishing guidelines for accessing and utilizing respite care. The comprehensive needs assessment will also identify the specific needs of children in alternative care, including those with complex emotional needs. The assessment will also consider the feasibility of linking Healthy Aging Centres to the respite care approach and engaging qualified pensioners as potential care-providers with due consideration for safety concerns and/or utilizing Healthy Aging Centres and municipal centres to promote the approach and expand its reach.
- Vulnerability assessments will focus on the needs of women, supporting the intervention's design to have the greatest impact. During the inception phase of implementation, targets will be developed, guided by the foundations built in previous studies, such as the Social Impact Assessment conducted by UNDP and UNICEF. These assessments identified key vulnerable groups specific to BiH based on a self-reported vulnerabilities approach. Additionally, UNDP's Intersectional Analysis, which assessed the situation of vulnerable groups of women through an intersectional lens, and their Intersectionality

Corner initiative, will be capitalized upon to inform this approach and ensure that no one is left behind. This activity will include deep consideration of intersectional vulnerabilities, studying existing models, identifying gaps, exploring best practices and engaging with various stakeholders such as foster care associations, social workers, policymakers and foster families to gather insights, perspectives and feedback. This comprehensive approach will ensure that the intersectional lens is effectively applied to the Gender Accelerator Framework, enhancing the overall impact of the intervention.

- Interventions will include an assessment of administrative processes and technical requirements of each model, as well as the feasibility and funding of these care models, promoting institutional cooperation for service-provision and enhancing access to public services, grants and funds, as well as exploring the possibility of public-private partnerships. The focus is on bridging the service gap and cultivating expertise. The goal is to foster a better understanding of the needs of women and vulnerable groups for social services, transitioning from no established knowledge to a comprehensive knowledge base.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women in partnership with governmental institutions, financial institutions, the private sector, academia and CSOs.

***Activity 2.1.2.2: Design and implement selected care economy models focused on women's empowerment through designing new services for children, including at-risk and/or with disabilities, as well as for older persons, the chronically ill and persons with disabilities, single-parent households.***

These services will include the following models:

- **Gerentodomacice (Caregivers)<sup>94</sup>:** This UN Women model offers a specific type of care for the elderly that address the need to provide assistance in the home for the elderly and, at the same time, offer employment and potential self-employment schemes for long-term unemployed and hard-to-employ women. UNFPA plans to pilot existing gerentodomacice models with two Healthy Ageing Centres with a phased approach to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the care model.
- **Respite care:** Building on the assessment (in Activity 2.1.2.1) and testing, a respite care model will be developed, offering a short-term break or relief for parents or caregivers who are experiencing stress, illness, or other circumstances that prevent them from fulfilling their caregiving responsibilities. This is especially critical for single parents, parents of children with disabilities and foster families, to prevent job loss and promote well-being. It also has transformative potential to address one of the bottlenecks to women's employment and expand available care options. Through this pilot, an approach will be tested that can eventually be scaled up to expand respite care across BiH. The aim is for the intervention to be further institutionalized through entity/district line ministries and for a sustainable approach to future financing to be developed, ultimately resulting in women's increased access to care options, improved access to the labour market and reduced job losses. Technical support will be provided to governments, on developing a scheduling mechanism, coordinating with caregivers to determine their respite care needs, and matching them with appropriate respite-care-providers. Support will be provided to local communities to identify and allocate necessary resources for implementing respite care, including by developing an investment case scenario, focusing on funding, staffing and the physical infrastructure required to provide respite care services. Capacity-building will also be provided to CSWs and respite care-providers. Local communities will be supported to recruit and train respite care-providers who will deliver the services, including conducting background checks, screening potential providers, and providing the necessary training on respite care techniques, safety protocols and communications skills.
- **Specialized foster care:** Building on the assessment, a specialized foster-care system will be developed to create a new, family-friendly form of employment for women and address a critical childcare gap. It will engage professionals, including social workers, psychologists, pedagogues and related professions,

<sup>94</sup> The document uses the term gerentodomacica/caregiver interchangeably. Both are meant to represent a person providing care of elderly individuals through provision of services such as: grocery shopping, paying bills, home chores, etc. Caregivers offer psychosocial and home support. They do not offer medical assistance.



and provide additional capacity-building and a salary for those caring for children with complex emotional needs and disabilities who require additional support.<sup>95</sup> This will create 120 new positions in six municipalities over a four-year period – an estimated 78% of which will benefit women.<sup>96</sup> The new model will be based on identified needs and may include designing frameworks, guidelines and protocols that ensure the provision of appropriate and tailored services to children with complex emotional needs. The specialized foster care system in BiH will be developed considering best practices in the region and with support from a working group of BiH professionals to adapt the approach to the local context and ensure that it is family-friendly and empowers women by design. The new programme will be piloted to test its effectiveness with a sample group of foster-care-providers and children with complex emotional needs to assess the feasibility, impact and scalability of the model. Technical support will be provided for training and capacity-building programmes for CSWs, foster-care-providers, social workers and other professionals, which will be continuously reviewed and improved based on feedback, data and lessons learned. The current legislative framework facilitates this intervention, but if changes to legislation are proposed by the competent authorities, this will also be pursued. Throughout the process, UNICEF will work closely with municipal, cantonal and entity authorities to institutionalize the approach. This intervention is prioritized by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare RS and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy FBiH as part of the BiH Deinstitutionalization Road Map and contributes both to women's economic empowerment and expanding care options in BiH.

- **Preschool education expansion programme:** This activity will include mobilizing UNICEF evidence from ECCE expansion feasibility studies, modelled in two BiH cities to support authorities to expand ECCE programmes so more women can participate in the labour market. By mobilizing evidence on the return of investment, the JP will advocate for increased subsidies and budgets for the ECCE sector, develop and train teachers to deliver its family-engagement programme aimed at transforming negative gender norms in childcare, promoting the more equal distribution of unpaid work in families. To scale-up ECCE enrolment, the JP will strategically partner with selected BiH authorities to provide co-funding incentives to plan and implement ECCE-sector expansion. The authorities will be supported to implement innovative expansion models that foster multisectoral and multi-level financing and public-private partnerships will be further promoted to BiH administrative units to continue with ECCE expansion. Simultaneously, it will support preschools to implement family-engagement programmes focused on gender-transformative parenting, with the goal to redistribute unpaid work between mothers and fathers. The family engagement programme will enable meetups of mothers and fathers, which will contribute to developing personal networks and support systems. The JP will partner with public universities to develop a continuous professional development programme for ECCE teachers for gender-transformative parenting, to pilot in selected administrative units, digitizing the content for further scale-up. The JP will also support governance systems to embed ECCE expansion in public budgets, to ensure sustainability.

This activity will be jointly supported by UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women in close partnership with governmental institutions in FBiH and RS, CSOs, employment agencies, and the private sector.

***Activity 2.1.2.3. Promote awareness and sensitize stakeholders and the general population on the services provided by these multi-faceted models.***

- UNFPA plans to strategically raise awareness and foster understanding among stakeholders and the general public of the findings of the assessment and newly designed models. This will be done through a targeted campaign, through both social and traditional media, to reach approximately 100,000 people

<sup>95</sup> In BiH, the absence of specialized foster care is a critical gap in the care system. Children with complex emotional needs, disabilities or who experienced trauma are children with specific conditions, and instead of receiving the appropriate care through specialized foster care, they are currently placed in residential care where the risk of stigmatization, discrimination, trauma, violence and abuse is elevated.

<sup>96</sup> 78% of new positions are estimated to benefit women, given that 78% of the current 1,776 CSW staff are women. Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 2023. *Social Welfare Thematic Bulletin 2017-2022*, p. 20.



in the general population within the target age groups. The emphasis will be on creating widespread understanding of the benefits that these care models bring to the community.

- UN Women will utilize the *Nemam ti kad* (I do not have time) first-place winning campaign in Public Relations at the No Limit BH Advertising Festival 2023, to continue raising awareness on the care economy and the disproportionate care work women face in the country. Additionally, the campaign will be used for the purpose of creating the space for stakeholders' engagement in the area of the care economy to coordinate efforts in the implementation of relevant actions and recommendations provided in the activities listed above.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women in partnership with media, governmental institutions, the private sector, PR agencies, etc.

**Output 2.2.1: Selected private and public institutions have improved capacities to address gender stereotypes and discrimination and design and promote gender-responsive workforces and workplaces.**

***Activity 2.2.1.1. Support public and private companies to develop gender-responsive workplace standards through the implementation of tailor-made programmes.***

- Support public and private companies in establishing gender-responsive workplace standards by implementing customized programmes such as UNFPA Gender-Responsive Family Friendly Policies (GRFFP), UNDP's Gender Equality Seal and UN Women and UN Global Compact's Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). The activity foresees integrating customised operating model across selected private and public companies that contributes to creating workplaces removed from gender-specific barriers to women's participation in labour market. Activity incorporates activation efforts across the private sector, assessment of existing model of selected companies, capacity-building trainings for the companies and implementation of the model. This activity aims to significantly increase the number of companies that assess their policies and practices, engage in capacity-building activities, endorse and implement related action plans, and become examples of good practices. The aim is to improve institutional and company policies and practices for gender equality, moving from an initially minimal and conservative number of company policies to having more than 60 companies showcasing transformative gender-responsive practices. Key partnerships include chambers of commerce, civil society organizations, institute for standardization, universities, association of employers.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP in partnership with Bit Alliance, USAID Turizam project, the AGE, Gender Centres in RS and FBiH, and the private sector.

***Activity 2.2.1.2. Support governmental institutions and business-development support organizations to improve their capacities to design and implement gender-specific policies.***

- Leveraging the success of its Expanding Choices Regional Programme, UNFPA will increase the number of empowered institutions from one to three, ensuring that they are equipped to implement gender equality in the workplace and the broader economy, and adopting the GRFFP and/or WEPs within their policies. UNFPA will provide knowledge assets, workshops and promotional material, as well as targeted supervision and ad hoc technical support. By extending tailored technical assistance, UNDP will implement a comprehensive capacity-development programme targeting the relevant government institutions and business development support organizations within the country, including the chambers of commerce, as a holistic entrepreneurship ecosystem. This initiative aims to bolster their capabilities in effectively nurturing women entrepreneurs, thus enhancing the overall business environment countrywide. Through the training programmes, expert guidance, and facilitated access to financing, UNDP will seek to cultivate a supportive ecosystem conducive to the success of women-led and owned enterprises.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with Chambers of Commerce, including line ministries of economy/development.

**Activity 2.2.1.3. Promote positive practices and champions in gender-responsive workplace standards.**

- Engage private companies and the general population in awareness-raising, impacting half a million individuals in the general population. Aimed at creating a supportive and equitable work environment for both women and men, these collaborative efforts seek to promote positive practices of private and public sector companies who championed in *walking the talk* of gender equality showing that transformative changes in organizational culture and practices are possible when strategic decision, time and effort are invested.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women in partnership with the private sector, governmental institutions, media and CSOs.

**Activity 2.2.1.4. Develop and implement specialized upskilling and vocational training programmes for women.**

- UNDP will support governments to develop and implement programmes with an innovative approach that combines green principles with digital and entrepreneurial skills development, targeting priority industries such as IT, tourism, metal industry, agri-business, etc. The goal is to engage a significant number of women in job training or green-focused vocational training and encourage the adoption of sustainable practices in their respective sectors. This initiative also aims to contribute to creating green jobs, with a target of enabling 1,000 women to gain relevant skills and employment.
- UNFPA envisions to tackle the need for institutions to reform their work in order to attract inactive population, one of the ways forward is to organise a public call together with a selected institute and invite the private sector and inactive women to apply for a 6 month training programme where we would pay half and institute pay the other half of gross salary of trained women. This would serve as a pilot initiative and enable institutes to scale up lessons learned across the country where payments would be steered towards women and not their employers. At the same time, employers would participate as their corporate social responsibility and developing human capital that might remain in employment after the training.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with Employment Bureaus at local, cantonal and entity levels.

**Activity 2.2.1.5. Pilot behavioural economics interventions to enhance gender equality practices and policies within BiH private companies.**

- This pilot will engage 20 companies in achieving a substantial 40% increase from the baseline rate in adopting gender-inclusive policies. This strategic approach looks to leverage insights from behavioural economics to foster a workplace environment that supports gender equality and offers a model for wider adoption within the private sector. These activities are intended to create a more inclusive and sustainable workforce, aligning gender equality goals with green transition and digital transformation efforts in the country and instigating progressive changes in corporate policy and culture.

This activity will be implemented by UNDP in partnership with the selected private sector companies.

**Activity 2.2.1.6. Support networking, exchange, and knowledge-sharing to advance gender-transformative practices in decent work and the care economy.**

This activity aims to create a collaborative environment for women to exchange best practices through the Women Forum for Development platform, expanded from the SIDA-funded and UNDP-led projects. Mentoring

programs, exchanges and collaborative actions will foster inclusive dialogues and networking among diverse women, while tailored support tools will address biases and raise awareness of gender inequality's root causes. Implemented by UNDP in partnership with Agency for Gender Equality and various stakeholders, this initiative focuses on advancing gender equality and promoting inclusive development in the areas of decent work and care economy.

Firstly, it will develop support tools tailored to the needs of transformative women leaders, enhancing their effectiveness in driving gender-transformative development in the areas of care economy and decent work, through tackling existing bias, stereotypes, internalised misogyny and raising awareness of root-causes of gender inequality.

Secondly, it will implement priority initiatives through Women's Forum for Development Roadmaps aimed at advancing gender equality and inclusive development with the focus on care economy and decent work.

This activity will be implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Agency for Gender Equality BiH, government institutions, business leaders, academia and civil society organizations.

**Output 2.2.2: Women-owned business and women entrepreneurs have strengthened capacities and resilience as a result of different targeted financial and non-financial support, and advisory support to relevant stakeholders on strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem:**

***Activity 2.2.2.1. Strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem, regulatory framework and women's entrepreneurial support through institutional advisory services, policy design and partnerships between public and private sector actors.***

- Aggregate lessons learned from the advisory support given to identified stakeholders to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem, regulatory framework, and women's financial and non-financial support (including availability and further development of the government subsidies and commercial funding sources). This will include support to the BiH Advisory Board for Women's Entrepreneurship (which consists of government, the private sector, entrepreneurs/women-owned businesses, CSOs and Chambers of Commerce), to develop a strategy applying a gender lens to entrepreneurial ecosystem development and use their unique position of power to influence positive change and capacitate ecosystem stakeholders to reach common goals.

This activity will be implemented by UN Women in partnership with governmental institutions, entrepreneurs, the private sector, Chambers of Commerce of RS and FBiH, and CSOs.

***Activity 2.2.2.2. Enhance women's research and development, innovation and learning capacities through direct technical support.***

- Design, develop and implement learning opportunities and enable access to technical support for women to enhance their entrepreneurial and digital skills as well as green competencies, including co-designing and organizing Green Entrepreneurship Academies for young women and women, and establish Circular Business Clubs in partnership with universities in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, the Green Design Centre in Mostar.
- Enhance women's research, development and innovation capacities related to the green transition through joint research projects connecting universities, innovation labs in universities, Science and Technology Parks and the private sector in priority industries.
- Provide direct and tailor-made advisory support, based on a competitive selection of women-led businesses, designed to support their resilience and growth. Activities will aim increase the knowledge of women business-owners on how to establish, run, grow and maintain the resilience of a business, and improve their business performance through increased revenue, sales, production processes or service efficiency compared to the baseline determined during the initial diagnostic process.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UNDP and UN Women in partnership with CSOs, the private sector and academia.

***Activity 2.2.2.3. Strengthen the capacity and resilience of women entrepreneurs to access financial streams through capacity-building activities, analysis of the available and potential financial support, innovative access to finance models and by assessing the social welfare flows available to vulnerable and rural women.***

- Enhance women entrepreneurs' resilience and ability to tap into various financial resources, including innovative finance models. UNDP will design, develop and deploy learning opportunities and enable access to financial support for women while enhancing their entrepreneurial and digital skills as well as green competencies. These programmes will bolster women's skillsets and open doors to financial support.
- UN Women will contribute by generating knowledge on innovative access to finance for women entrepreneurs and by piloting such models through capacity-building to test them in practice. It will cultivate collaborative relationships between the public and private sector through networking and advocacy, exemplified by the European Business Angel Network and Women's Entrepreneurship EXPO, all aimed at supporting an active investment community, opening up avenues to previously inaccessible private capital and igniting an investment component in the ecosystem.
- UNFPA will focus on improving effective access to public funding for marginalized women, to improve their socioeconomic situation, economic resilience and sustainability. This will be done through capacity-building sessions targeting at least 150 vulnerable women as beneficiaries.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP in partnership with governmental organizations, financial organizations, international organizations, private sector, women entrepreneurs, women-owned businesses, etc.

**Output 2.2.3: Girls, young women and women are empowered to enter and grow in the digital age through access to enhanced digital and entrepreneurial skills, inclusive learning environments, mentorship, networking and strengthened leadership, advocacy and confidence-building.**

This workstream is dedicated to bridging gender disparities and transforming detrimental social norms within STEM fields, thereby enhancing women's engagement in the digital era through comprehensive learning opportunities, mentorship programmes, strategic social and behavioural interventions and networking.

***Activity 2.2.3.1. Provide skilling, reskilling and upskilling opportunities for girls, young women and educators, through programmes focusing on improving digital, entrepreneurial and green competencies.***

- Equipping women and girls with advanced digital, entrepreneurial and green competencies, through both formal and informal learning opportunities and innovative learning tools, will seek to empower them to navigate and flourish in the digital age and develop entrepreneurial skills with a sustainable development vision. This activity seeks to address the significant digital skills gap in the BiH labour market, advocating for the inclusion of girls and women in digital and green transition efforts and striving to initiate a lasting cultural shift in gender role perceptions, starting from the family unit, through capacity-building and learning, and into the labour market. A holistic approach to the capacity-advancement, upskilling and re-skilling of women and girls will be adopted, starting from primary and secondary education levels through to university and continuing into their professional lives. It will empower girls and women to choose STEM educational and career opportunities, with a special focus on entrepreneurial, digital and green competencies. In partnership with academia and education systems, the initiative aims to develop specific programmes that not only enhance the current digital and pedagogical abilities of educators but, more importantly, ensure access to necessary and unique digital and entrepreneurial skills in the labour market for current and future generations. This concerted effort aims to challenge and transform negative gendered social norms that currently impede women's participation in STEM fields and ensure equal opportunities for all, emphasizing the sustainability of efforts and their potential to effect long-term, positive impacts on society at large.

- UNICEF will lead the digital and programming skills-building of girls through the formal education system and adapt the current STEM subjects syllabi in selected administrative units and procure Arduino electronic kits to enable girls' digital, programming and electronics skills-building.
- UNICEF and UNFPA will develop a programme to enhance educators' pedagogical and digital competences, as per the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators, including gender-sensitive teaching and bodily autonomy in online work.
- UNDP will implement Postani IT Girl & Go Circular training programmes for young women and other seasonal learning opportunities that blend digital savvy with entrepreneurial innovation, propelling young women towards crafting digital solutions in harmony with sustainable and circular economic models. It will also run summer and winter schools for virtual reality, augmented reality and related programming-language-learning opportunities for young women.

This activity will be implemented by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in partnership with line ministries of education, private sector and relevant institutions at local, cantonal and entity levels.

***Activity 2.2.3.2. Provide opportunities for networking, mentorship and learning to support and promote women and girls in a sustainable digital age.***

- UNICEF will conduct an assessment of current practices and needs for digital skills in the education curricula, to adapt STEM subject syllabi in selected administrative units.
- UNICEF will also work on the development of the programme for enhancing educators' pedagogical and digital competences as per the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators, including gender-sensitive teaching.
- This will directly replicate into the digital skills building in the classrooms, where UNICEF will provide electronics equipment for certain number of schools for girls to access learning advance digital skills including programming, and robotics through formal education system.
- UN Women will lay the groundwork for a dynamic nexus of networking and mentorship programmes that champion the active participation and ascension of women and girls in the eco-conscious digital landscape, leveraging existing and upcoming partnerships with the private sector. The network of women and girls in ICT is a pivotal congregation point to celebrate and propagate female digital power. UN Women will provide spaces to gather, exchange and promote women in digital fields and establish tailored mentorship and sponsorship initiatives to encourage women and girls on their journey into the digital realm, engaging closely with the private sector to fill the gap between university and the job market through internships and job opportunities.
- UN Women will test behavioural interventions produced through Gender GAP in STEM Research to uproot entrenched behavioural barriers impeding the entry of girls and young women into ICT/STEM careers.
- UN Women, UNICEF and UNDP envision cooperative ventures such as competitions, hackathons and ideathons jointly organized by UN and other stakeholders to mark important days and provide an arena for immediate immersion in digital enterprises.
- Moreover, UNDP will pilot Green Entrepreneurship Start-up Camps for girls who successfully finish Postani IT Girls training sessions to connect and boost their knowledge on green entrepreneurship, including skills of the future, e-commerce digital proficiency, etc. UNDP will also update its [BizVenture entrepreneurship simulation game](#) by partnering with universities and the Science and Technology park to include additional priority industry modules following green transition and circular economy principles and organize BizVenture Entrepreneurship Championships for young women to foster hands-on business acumen.
- In parallel, UNFPA will anchor mentorship and networking on digital safety through its [Bodyright campaign](#). An uptick is anticipated in the empowerment of stakeholders to improve essential services, adopt practices and provide resources that support the digital and entrepreneurial ascent of girls and women. The efficacy of these initiatives will be gauged by the sustained interest in [IT Girls](#) activities, the

propulsion of young women into green entrepreneurial ventures, and the breadth of influence of digital safety mentorship efforts.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women, UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with Bit Alliance, private ICT sector companies, academia, CSOs and governmental institutions.

### **Transformative Impact Area 3: ELEVATING women in leadership and gender-responsive governance**

In line with SDGs 5 and 16, UNSDCF Outcome 4, and GAP Priority Areas 1.2, 2.2 and 3.2, this impact area will seek to achieve the impact-level goal that ***more women and girls effectively participate in leadership and decision-making at all levels in public, economic and political life***, through the aforementioned outcomes, which will be achieved through the following outputs, activities and methods:

**Output 3.1.1: Women and adolescent girls have increased capacities to actively participate in leadership, engage equally in decision-making and take the lead in driving gender-transformative development, through educational initiatives, training, networking and the exchange of best practices.**

***Activity 3.1.1.1. Develop and implement a comprehensive civic education programme, to also include adolescent/youth girls' empowerment, for future political and civic leaders, including skills-building and opportunities to engage in governance processes.***

- Launch a transformative initiative aimed at fostering civic engagement and empowering adolescent and young girls in all their diversity as future leaders to integrate voter education with initiatives specifically tailored to cultivate leadership skills of 10,000 women and girls (the activity will incorporate innovative tools such as UNFPA's Viber Bot on voter education). Governmental institutions such as the Central Election Committee will be actively involved during the implementation with aim of securing their ownership and ensure sustainability beyond JP.
- Establish initiative targeting of 75 girls over three years, focusing on nurturing their leadership potential, to equip them with the necessary skills and opportunities to actively participate in political and civic spheres (the activity will leverage UNFPA's successful Girls Advance Lab mentorship-based innovation platform, providing a nurturing environment for young women and girls to unleash their creativity and talents).
- Facilitate tailored capacity-building and continuous mentoring, empowering women and girls to lead change in their communities through the development of six policy proposals with solutions to societal challenges hindering their full potential.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UNFPA and UN Women in partnership with selected CSOs.

***Activity 3.1.1.2. Support the capacity-development of women to engage equally in decision-making processes.***

- Conduct mapping of political academies, providing strategic insights into existing resources and opportunities for women's political empowerment, and informing capacity-development efforts planned under this activity.
- Provide training-of-trainers on political leadership and candidate training, certifying 27 trainers who will mentor aspiring female leaders and extend their expertise to empower 500 women aspirants and election candidates through tailored training sessions designed to address their unique challenges and needs.
- Facilitate legislative induction workshops for 150 women elected officials at both local and higher governmental levels, aiming to foster gender-responsive policymaking and supportive environment conducive to nurturing women's leadership and amplifying their voices in decision-making processes.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women and UNDP in partnership with selected government institutions and CSOs.



***Activity 3.1.1.3. Support networking and exchange on best practices in inclusive decision-making to facilitate leadership in gender-transformative development.***

- Foster a collaborative environment to share and exchange best practices in inclusive decision-making by creating a platform for networking, regular exchanges and knowledge-sharing, building on existing platforms, infrastructure and human capital built through SIDA-funded and UNDP-led “Strengthening Local Communities” and “Women in Elections” projects and engaging 50 local gender mechanisms and gender focal points (establishing and facilitating a mentoring scheme on generational exchange among women leaders, to foster knowledge transfer and leadership continuity; and coordinating networking and exchange events, ensuring the participation of women and adolescent girls in all their diversity).
- Develop eight support tools tailored to the needs of women leaders, enhancing their effectiveness in driving gender-transformative development, through tackling existing bias, stereotypes and raising awareness of root-causes of gender inequality.
- Establish and implement the Women’s Leadership Excellence Programme, which will benefit 100 women and girls by providing them with essential skills and opportunities for leadership development.
- Promote gender equality and women leadership in the workplaces, equitable recruitment at managerial level, and institutionalise measures that prevent gender-based discrimination and harassment through customised technical support programmes, policy work to improve institutional framework, advocacy and awareness work and integration of monitoring mechanisms that will track the progress and impact of gender-equality initiatives in the work environment especially at leadership level

Implement 20 priority initiatives through Women’s Forum for Development Roadmaps aimed at advancing gender equality and inclusive development and ensure strengthening of at least five institutions and private companies to design and deliver gender equality in leadership and managerial level. This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with the AGE, selected local communities, government institutions and CSOs.

**Output 3.1.2. Media, men and boys, and key stakeholders have increased capacities to contribute to transforming gender norms and stereotypes condoning violence against women in politics and preventing women’s equal participation in decision-making and leadership.**

***Activity 3.1.2.1. Provide technical support and capacity-development to public broadcasters and other media to report positive portrayals of women and girl leaders and marginalized groups.***

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- Conduct two assessments to evaluate the portrayal of women in the media, covering the period of pre-election campaigns in 2024 and 2026, generating crucial insights to inform targeted interventions, including technical support and capacity-building.
- Assess existing policies and norms within media outlets to positively report on women and girl leaders. Following the assessment, the intervention will follow to improve policies and norms where such exist in at least two media outlets and public broadcasters to incorporate standards that encourage positive reporting on women and girl leaders, or develop ethical standards for at least two public broadcasters and other media outlets that do not have them established. The adoption of these ethical standards will be promoted through Standard Operating Procedures in at least 10 media outlets (both public and private), which will also be trained on these SOPs.
- Facilitate 10 training sessions aimed at equipping media professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to report on gender-related topics in a gender-responsive/transformative and empowering manner, fostering a media landscape that reflects and celebrates the diverse experiences and contributions of women, girl leaders and marginalized groups, ultimately promoting gender equality and social inclusion.



This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with civil society organizations, media professionals, broadcasters and representatives of marginalized communities, and in consultation with the BiH Press Council and BiH Regulatory Communication Agency as relevant. CSOs will be engaged as responsible parties to conduct assessments and implement training sessions for media.

***Activity 3.1.2.2. Facilitate male allyship for promotion of women and gender perspectives in decision-making.***

- Localize UN Women’s global HeForShe campaign in BiH, emphasizing the engagement of male allies in advocating for women’s rights and gender perspectives in decision-making processes and working towards the goal of recruiting 100 HeForShe male Champions for Gender Equality.
- Implement targeted advocacy and awareness-raising efforts to cultivate a supportive environment where male allies champion the inclusion of women and gender perspectives in decision-making at all levels, ultimately benefiting women and girls, who stand to gain from increased representation, recognition, and support in shaping policies and programmes that affect their lives.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with selected local communities, government institutions, civil society organizations and media.

***Activity 3.1.2.3. Build the capacities of key stakeholders to design and implement initiatives to mitigate biases, stereotypes and violence against women in political processes.***

- Enhance the capacities of key stakeholders to design and implement initiatives addressing topics that would positively influence the creation of more inclusive political environments.
- Conduct a baseline study to identify the most prevalent types, root causes, and multi-faceted effects of violence against women in politics, as a crucial foundation for informing subsequent interventions.
- Facilitate six policy dialogues with relevant stakeholders to foster a better understanding of the factors enabling and obstructing women's political participation and leadership in BiH.
- Support the implementation of five initiatives by key stakeholders, including political parties, parliamentary bodies and gender institutions, to address biases, stereotypes and violence against women in political processes.
- Capacitate and inspire 100 students and young future professionals to utilize audiovisual arts and narratives to challenge cultural norms, transform stereotypes and combat biases.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with selected local communities and CSOs, educational institutions, government institutions and political parties.

**Output 3.2.1. Policy and decision-makers at all government levels have acquired knowledge in policymaking and budgeting to support the design of strategic approaches, learning, knowledge-generation and exchange on gender-responsive and sustainable planning, policymaking and budgeting for sustainable development across government levels:**

***Activity 3.2.1.1. Provide technical support to authorities at all government levels on gender-responsive policy, planning and public finance management.***

- Strengthen the capacities of 500 civil servants in introductory and advanced gender mainstreaming/gender-responsive budgeting courses, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to integrate gender considerations into policy formulation, planning processes and public finance management.
- Strengthen capacities of gender institutional mechanisms to conduct regular and comprehensive gender impact analyses, for full implementation and follow-up on relevant policy and legislation processes.
- Institutionalize the training programme within the existing training system operated by the entity civil service agencies/RS Ministry for Administration and Local Self Governance. Provide technical expertise and guidance to support the development and implementation of 80 gender-responsive strategic and implementation frameworks, thus strengthening the linking between strategic plans and budgets and laying the groundwork for gender equality and women's empowerment across various sectors.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women and UNDP in partnership with selected local, entity and state institutions.

***Activity 3.2.1.2. Provide expert and financial support to up to 15 cities and municipalities to develop and implement local gender-responsive initiatives and the development of mayors', city and cantonal leaders' skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver on the SDGs, with a focus on SDGs 5 and 11 and making their cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.***

- Provide technical expertise and financial support to up to 15 cities and municipalities, facilitating the development and implementation of local gender-responsive initiatives, including capacity-building of mayors, city leaders and cantonal policymakers to enhance their skills and knowledge to effectively deliver on the SDGs (namely SDGs 5 and 11, thereby fostering inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities).
- Provide specialized support to ensure a gender-responsive approach in the design and implementation of local initiatives, empowering 100 mayors and senior policymakers, enabling them to gain new

knowledge and skills essential for driving gender equality and sustainable development agendas at the local level.

- Catalyse the development of up to 15 local initiatives aimed at making cities and municipalities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and creating positive, lasting impacts for the beneficiaries and communities they serve, advancing gender equality and sustainable urban development.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women and UNDP in partnership with selected local and cantonal governments and mayors. UNDP will lead on the local development and implementation of local initiatives (in close cooperation with women-led and grassroots CSOs and utilizing its platforms such as Women Forum for Development), while UN Women will lead on gender mainstreaming aspects of the intervention.

**Output 3.2.2. Parliamentary groups, audit institutions and political parties have the knowledge and skills to improve accountability for sustainable development, introduce gender-responsive institutional reforms to enable women's full participation in decision-making, and ensure the gender-responsiveness of government programmes and policies:**

***Activity 3.2.2.1. Provide advanced technical support to audit institutions in preparing for SDG-based audits.***

- Facilitate advanced technical support to audit institutions in preparing for SDG-based audits, including specialized training programmes and workshops to equip 20 auditors with advanced capacities and in-depth knowledge of SDG-based audits, based on the Intosai Development Initiative methodology.<sup>97</sup>
- Provide technical expertise and guidance to support the implementation of SDG-based audit methodologies and practices, facilitating the integration of SDG principles and targets, including indicator 5.c.1, into seven audit processes, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of audit institutions in assessing progress towards sustainable development goals through better identification of gaps, assessments of impacts, and recommendations of policy interventions to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and SDG 5 in particular.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women and UNDP in partnership with audit institutions.

***Activity 3.2.2.2. Exchange good practices and provide advanced technical support to parliamentary groups on oversight of SDG implementation, including support to gender equality and women's empowerment thematic parliamentary groups for the promotion of gender-transformative development.***

- Strengthen relevant parliamentary committees' capacities for parliamentary oversight of GRB implementation, including on reviewing draft budgets and expenditures to ensure GRB implementation.
- Support the exchange of good practices and provide advanced technical support to parliamentary groups, aiming to promote a more coherent and integrated approach to sustainable and gender-transformative development decision-making and oversight.
- Enhance coordination among different parliamentary bodies (thematic commissions at multiple levels of government) and with civil society, considering the integrated nature of gender equality and Agenda 2030.
- Strengthen the capacities of parliamentarians to advocate and lead gender-transformative initiatives within the wider framework of sustainable development, support dedicated parliamentary thematic sessions on key sustainable development priorities, with civil society participation, and provide opportunities for learning and exchange with international peers.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with parliaments, parliamentary bodies and civil society organizations.

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<sup>97</sup> <https://www.idi.no/work-streams/relevant-sais/auditing-sdgs/audit-sdgs-implementation/isam>



***Activity 3.2.2.3. Promote SDG audit recommendations, including on SDGs 3, 4, 5 and 16, and support their implementation and follow-up by facilitating closer collaboration between audit offices and parliamentary bodies.***

- Establish a comprehensive database of SDG audit recommendations, providing a centralized platform for monitoring and tracking progress.
- Facilitate the coordination between audit offices and parliamentary bodies, ensuring effective communication and collaboration to enhance the adoption and implementation of SDG audit recommendations.
- Provide technical support and expertise to assist in the implementation and follow-up of these recommendations, particularly in areas related to health, education, gender equality, and peacebuilding, aiming to improve the accountability and transparency of government actions towards achieving the SDGs, ultimately benefiting citizens and communities by promoting evidence-based policymaking and ensuring progress towards sustainable development objectives.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with audit offices, parliaments, parliamentary bodies and civil society organizations.

***Activity 3.2.2.4. Support gender-transformative reforms in political parties.***

- Develop 10 gender audit reports and action plans for political parties to assess the institutionalization of gender equality within political parties, evaluating their policies, programmes, structures, proceedings and budgets.
- Foster gender-transformative reforms within political parties, thereby promoting more inclusive and representative political systems benefiting political parties themselves, as well as women and marginalized groups within these parties, who stand to benefit from increased gender equality and inclusivity in party structures and decision-making processes.

This activity will be jointly implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA in partnership with political party representatives, civil society organizations and gender experts.

**Sustainability**

Sustainability of the results will be achieved through changes at three different levels:

- At the **legislative and policy level**, through the adoption and improvement of relevant pieces of legislation, policies and documents.
- At the **institutional level**, through the provision of cutting-edge policy advice and institutionalization of capacity-building, the development of internal policies and procedures, the creation of mandates with functions to be taken over by partner State agencies, the handover of developed practices, programmes and services to relevant State agencies, and the institutionalization of M&E and reporting mechanisms for policies, programmes and action plans. These measures will be applied by conducting comprehensive training programmes for policymakers and relevant stakeholders, developing clear guidelines and tools that outline best practices, establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress, engaging with stakeholders and civil society to ensure inclusivity, and systematically integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the overall public finance management process.
- Within the **private sector**, sustainability is achieved by ensuring adequate capacity building, adoption and ownership of gender responsive policy mechanisms within the companies' existing business structures.
- At the **community level**, through sustainable investment in capacities, leadership and networking among the CSOs and human rights defenders, and enabling their ability to demand accountability for commitments to gender equality and empowerment of women. This approach ensures that these efforts are not only effective in the short term but also foster long-term resilience, creating a self-sustaining movement toward gender equality and women's empowerment

- At the **social norms** level, through well-targeted and creative communications and outreach strategies and creation of dialogue mechanisms and platforms that increase rights-holders' opportunities to engage with relevant duty-bearers and shape decision-making processes.

## 7. Risk Management

Risk	Risk level	Mitigation strategy (including Do No Harm considerations)
Adverse political developments, including possibly heightened security threats, effectively preventing project activities.	Low	Participating agencies will track developments on an ongoing basis to inform necessary project adjustments in case of a high-level security risk.
Key stakeholders do not actively engage in, or withdraw, from the engagement with the Gender Equality Accelerator.	Low	Participating agencies will regularly communicate with key stakeholders and provide regular quality assurance advice at the technical level, ensuring that feedback and concerns are addressed from the outset.
Outward migration, limited human capital	High	Through the field presence and partnerships, participating agencies will regularly monitor the situation, including fluctuation of beneficiaries, especially young women and work to ensure that young women are engaged in activities.
Ensuring cross-entity and cross-community cooperation due to the political context and interests.	Medium	Gender Equality Accelerator will be guided by the Gender Action Plan and its implementation and collaboration mechanisms. Furthermore, it will strive to expand issue-based alliances and alignment of stakeholders with common priorities and support cross-entity collaboration and learning.
Force majeure (e.g. natural hazards, disease outbreaks such as COVID-19, etc.)	Low	The Gender Equality Accelerator will have a flexible approach, including reprogramming of activities to respond to emerging needs.
Change in government priorities during project implementation could affect the involvement of media and local decision-makers	Medium	Ensuring the formal commitment of decision-makers and government units (through MoUs or similar agreements) and wide involvement of government representatives beyond only political appointees.
Governments at all levels in BiH may be reluctant to undertake new policy commitments and allocate public funds for policy implementation and service-provision.	Medium	The Gender Equality Accelerator will prioritize activities according to the strategic needs expressed by institutions. Partners will work with public institutions to ensure budgetary needs are embedded in their annual budgets.

Government overreliance on external expertise affecting ownership and sustainability	Medium	Ownership will be carefully nurtured at all stages of planning and implementation. This will be achieved through arranging for government leadership in processes, chairing and steering of working groups, as well as facilitating close linkages among government sectors and across governance levels and reliance on internal / local expertise (including from CSO and private sectors).
Existential pressures affecting the ability of CSOs to ensure sustained involvement in key processes and provision of key services (operations and human resources)	Medium	Provision of continued support to CSOs, supporting their organizational capacities and access to different sources of funding (including expanded budget financing). Also support to minimize the service-delivery burden shouldered by CSOs in favour of their watchdog function and ability to ensure accountability by duty bearers.
The restriction of civic spaces and the rise of anti-gender movements could threaten gender equality and efforts to combat GBV.	Medium	To strengthen alliances with like-minded organizations locally and internationally, the JP will enhance advocacy efforts against restrictive measures and anti-gender narratives. Providing technical, financial and legal assistance to CSOs and activists will help them navigate legal challenges and advocate for the protection of civic spaces and women's rights, as well as increase their level of sustainability. Additionally, launching targeted, public-awareness campaigns will raise awareness about democratic principles and gender equality, effectively countering the spread of misinformation by anti-gender movements.
Conditions for programme implementation, including continuity of capacities in project teams, ensuring appropriate coordination and a fully synergized approach to planning and implementation, and prioritizing against the partial availability of the required funding.	Low	PUNOs will ensure continuity in strategic guidance and operational capacities of the Gender Equality Accelerator teams. Furthermore, a strong sense of joint work will be nurtured continuously in line with UN "Delivering as One" principles. Coordination practices, joint working mechanisms and integrated teams will be integral to the programme implementation approach and strategy.
Risk of corruption compromising the integrity, accountability, and effectiveness.	Low	Corruption risks are effectively managed through the implementation of robust systems aligned with the United Nations anti-corruption policy. UN agencies minimize these risks through strong governance, transparent procurement, and stringent oversight. Transparent processes and accountability



		mechanisms are in place, supported by regular risk assessments, compliance with financial and operational standards, and continuous monitoring by bodies like the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Joint Inspection Unit. Standardized procurement processes, internal and external audits, and a zero-tolerance stance on corruption ensure accountability. Ethical behavior is promoted at all levels, with clear codes of conduct, training, and whistleblower protections through the Ethics Office, enabling safe reporting of misconduct and reducing conflicts of interest. A culture of integrity is fostered within institutions, complemented by partnerships with civil society and continuous capacity-building efforts, ensuring that anti-corruption measures remain effective and responsive to evolving challenges.
Fluctuation of the US\$ exchange rate against the EUR, to which the local currency is pegged, will influence Portfolio budgeting and implementation.	Low	Securing bigger initial tranches will greatly lessen the immediate effects of any exchange rate shifts. To stay ahead of potential risks, exchange rate patterns will be tracked along with scenario analyses, enabling proactive adjustments to financial strategies.
Risk that delays or reductions in financing arrangements by the donors which could create budget shortfalls, forcing revisions in scope and timelines.	Low	Regular communication channels with donors will be maintained. This will ensure transparency, provide timely updates on financing commitments, and allow for early adjustments to plans if needed. Additionally, as a contingency core resources will be utilized to prioritize critical activities in case of funding disruptions.
Risk of high staff turnover and insufficient internal capacities within PUNOs that could impact effective implementation and may lead to delays or reduced quality in programme delivery, potentially compromising the joint programme's intended outcomes and impact.	Low	Capacity building and training plans for the staff are in place including thorough onboarding processes for new staff. Staff retention strategies, such as enhancing professional development opportunities and improving workplace satisfaction will be utilized.
Risk of inadequate management of partnerships among UN agencies could lead to deviation from the core Portfolio objectives and intents, including reduced	Low	A clear coordination framework is established, setting out roles, responsibilities, and shared objectives to maintain alignment with the core goals.