

WOMAN TODAY

13TH CYCLE

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Banja Luka, January 2010



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INTRODUCTION

We are presenting you 13th publication related to "Woman Today" project activities, implemented in partnership of nongovernmental organizations "Helsinki Citizens Assembly" and "United Women," with support of Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation from Sweden.

All these years we had the same goal – decreasing all forms of discrimination against women. Progress is noticeable, however, we cannot be, and we are not satisfied with level of acquired rights of women in all fields of life. Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina are factor that cannot and must not be ignored in process of democratization in our society – therefore we are continuing our fight and advocacy actions to improve position of a woman in BiH society. We are continuing to work through this and all other projects implemented by our two associations.

As a part of this project, we implemented majority of activities on the local level, in municipalities and cities of Western Bosnia and Herzegovina. We were cooperating with nongovernmental organizations throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. We exchanged positive and negative experiences with women from the region, and focused on marginalization of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in relation to the negotiations with the international community. This brochure represents compilation of texts we used in our activities, and activity reports that are offering possibility to women and men readers to become familiar with attitudes and priorities of women that were involved in our local and regional activities.

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PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS

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LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Discussions about gender equality have been initiated during past ten years in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Opinions are diverse – some people emphasize this topic was enforced by the international community, although there was no real need for it (as we reached this equality long time ago, primarily thanks to the laws inherited from SFRY), while others say little has been done to reach real equality, despite large number of adopted laws, but also international and regional legal documents that are regulating this area. Gender equality is the topic that will not make you indifferent – from scientific debates, parliamentary platforms, and media programs, to everyday life – it has its supporters and opponents. This especially because speaking about gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina still means speaking about improving position of women, women's human rights, and methods and means of their achievement. There are numerous reasons for discussion about this topic, depending from the approach. The most visible is development approach that uses United Nations statistics, with following key data:

- Women are performing 67% of world labor
- Women make 10% of world income
- Women own 1% of world property
- Women make 70% of world illiterate people
- Women make 20–50% less than men for equal work worldwide
- Women make 70% of 1.3 billions of people living in extreme poverty
- Women make between 10 and 20% of executive and managerial positions
- Women make 10% of parliamentary seats
- 5% of state presidents are women.

Beside United Nations, the European Union emphasizes gender equality as the fundamental right and common value of member states. European Road Map¹ points at six priority areas for action in period from 2006 to 2010:

- Equal economic independence for women and men
- Harmonization of private and professional life
- Equal representation of women and men in decision making
- Elimination of gender based stereotypes
- Ending all forms of gender based violence
- Promoting gender equality in foreign and development policy.

We can say that legislative framework for gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina is satisfactory. Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, constitutions of the entities, Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)², Gender Equality Law of

1 "A Roadmap for Equality Between Women and Men 2006–2010," European Communities, Luxembourg: 2006.

2 Integral text is available at: <http://www.arsbih.gov.ba/index.aspx?PID=3&RID=48>



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Bosnia and Herzegovina³, Election Law of BiH⁴, special entity laws on protection from domestic violence⁵, are providing guarantees for non-discrimination based on sex/gender.

Besides legally binding documents, there are also political documents in this area, for example Council of Europe recommendations. Here I am pointing at few key recommendations – Council of Europe Recommendation on Ending Violence Against Women Rec 5 (2002)⁶, Council of Europe Recommendation on Participation of Women in Public and Political Life Rec 3 (2003)⁷, Council of Europe Recommendation on Elimination of Sexisms in Language Rec 4 (1990)⁸, Council of Europe Recommendation on Gender Sensitive Policies Rec14 (1998)⁹. One of the most important domestic political documents in this area is certainly BiH Parliamentary Assembly Resolution on Fighting Domestic Violence (2008)¹⁰.

With listing of selected legally binding and political documents, one can get impression of good coverage of gender equality area in general, as well as areas in which interventions with special laws were needed in order to eliminate causes of discrimination. Apart from that, Bosnia and Herzegovina established institutional mechanisms for gender equity and equality within executive governance¹¹ with the task to monitor implementation of laws and ensure balanced gender equality policy at all levels¹². There are also gender equality commissions and boards within legislative governance and local administrations and self-governance institutions. This creates picture of solid base for introducing principles of gender equality in all fields of public and private life.

However, regardless of formal institutional structure for gender equality, real life situation is still not satisfactory. Women's human rights are still violated, there is lack of protection, and financial means for offering support and assistance for victims are rather symbolic. Bosnia and Herzegovina met only the first level of international obligations related to adoption of laws and establishing national mechanisms. Although laws are necessary as the first step toward gender equality, they are certainly not enough. Beside existence of laws, it is necessary to work on increasing awareness – distribution of information, education about gender equality, increasing public awareness, but also undertaking protection measures through establishing

- 3 "Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina" No. 16/03, Text of the law is available at: <http://www.arsbih.gov.ba/index.aspx?PID=3&RID=39>
- 4 Text of the law is available at the web page of the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina: <http://www.izbori.ba/default.asp?col=zakon>
- 5 "Law on Protection from Domestic Violence", Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, No. 118/05 and No. 17/08, Available at the web page: http://www.narodnaskupstinars.net/lat/zakoni/zakon.php?id_zakona=127 and http://www.narodnaskupstinars.net/lat/zakoni/zakon.php?id_zakona=294, "Law on Protection from Domestic Violence", Official Gazette of Federation of BiH, No. 22/05, available at the web page: <http://www.fbihvlada.gov.ba/bosanski/zakoni/2005/zakoni/11bos.htm>
- 6 "Gender Equality in the International Documents", Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ed. Filipović-Hadžibabić, Samra, Sarajevo: 2006, pages 99–112. Text of the Recommendation also available at the web page: http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/equality/PDF_Rec%202002%205_Bosnian.pdf
- 7 Ibid, pages 115–22
- 8 Ibid, pages 63–5
- 9 Ibid, pages 85–7
- 10 "Resolution on Fighting Against Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina," Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed at 11 April 2008, Direct link: <http://www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/Source/bih_resolution_jan2008_en.pdf
- 11 See Annex no. 1
- 12 Article 24 of the Gender Equality Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina

and/or providing support for services for victims of discrimination gender/sex based violence, and sexual violence, both in public and private sphere of life.

According to the European Women's Lobby, one of the ways to check if a state fulfills its obligations related to ensuring protection from domestic violence is to "check services provided by a state to victims of violence. Way of financing for these services represents indicator for level of state support, and recognizing need to address male violence against women."¹³ This obligation is also recognized by the Beijing Declaration, which determines it is necessary to "ensure well financed shelter and assistance for women and female children that were exposed to violence, as well as medical, psychological, and other counseling services and free or low price legal assistance if needed, and adequate assistance to enable them to find means for living."¹⁴ Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of Republika Srpska is the only domestic law in the area of gender equality that, beside prohibiting domestic violence and regulating penalties and protection measures for violation of the law, also regulates that "means for temporary shelter and care for victims of violence in the safe house shall be secured from the entity budget, up to 70% of financial resources needed for the work of the safe house, and from the budgets of cities and municipalities up to 30% of financial resources needed for the work of the safe house."¹⁵ Domestic violence is not the only example, but certainly is the most representative one to point at the specific women's interests in acquiring right on protection from domestic violence. I selected it to illustrate how public budgets (municipal/city, entity, and state) must pay attention on needs of women and men in the process of planning, development, and spending of the budgetary resources. To avoid confusion, "gender budgeting does not presuppose different budgets for women and men, but adequate and just allocation of existing resources in the budget, with objective of satisfying specific needs of women/girls and men/boys, and elimination of inequalities in the budget."¹⁶ Without financial resources, we cannot expect that adopted laws, proclaimed public policies, and planned activities will be implemented in the practice.

Gender equality represents matter of the law, but also public policies, practices, changes of public awareness, informing, education, and whole range of other activities that require analysis, planning, implementation of activities, and determining responsibilities for each subject involved in this process on individual basis. "None of these responsibilities [...] can be implemented without adequate financial resources."¹⁷ Gender equality represents necessary precondition for democratization of a society, but also the public interest of a community, which should not allow ignoring over 50% of human resources, and exposing these human resources to discrimination, gender/sex based violence, sexisms in speech and act, underpaid labor, unpaid work out of labor market, and under representation in public life and decision making processes. All encompassing and harmonized state public policy in aimed to elimination



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13 "Toward Joint European Framework for Monitoring Progress", European Women's Lobby, 2001.

14 "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, page 65.Text of the Declaration is available at the web page: <http://www.arsbih.gov.ba/index.aspx?PID=3&RID=76>

15 "Law on Changes and Amendments of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence", Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, No. 17/08, from 26 February 2008, Article 7, Point 3.

16 "Challenges and Possibilities for Introducing Gender Sensitive Budgeting in the Area of Domestic Violence on Local and Entity Level in Bosnia and Herzegovina", Editors Golubović, Nada and Minja Damjanović, United Women, Banja Luka: 2007, page 11

17 Professor Miodrag Simović, PhD, judge of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, public hearing, People's Assembly of Republika Srpska, July, 2007.



of inequalities, improving position of women, and integrating principles of gender equality through all public and governmental institutions is needed in order for us to recognize Bosnia and Herzegovina as the country that shows not only determination, but really acts progressively in gender equality area.

Prijedor 24 February 2009

Gradiska, 20 March 2009

Novi Grad, 14 April 2009

Kozarska Dubica, 15 May 2009

SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS IN PRIJEDOR, GRADISKA, NOVI GRAD AND KOZARSKA DUBICA

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

"To talk about gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, still means to talk about improvement of women's' position, women's human rights and ways and means for satisfying these rights", stated Natalija Petric, M.Sc. of Gender Studies, introductory speaker at the public discussions. She emphasized that the road towards reaching full gender equality, not only in BiH but also outside its borders, was still a very long one. She presented the UN statistics on women, to support her views: women perform 67% of world labor, and receive only 10% of world's income, women own only 1% of world's assets, women make 70% of world's illiterate population, women earn 50% less than man for the same work, among 1.3 billion people who live in the extreme poverty, there are 70% women. Women hold between 10 and 20% of executive and management positions, 10% of seats in the parliaments, and only 5% of women are state presidents.

Natalija Petric talked about gender equality in the European Union as the fundamental right and common value of member countries. European Road Map highlighted six priority areas of action for the period 2006–1010: equal economic independence of women and men, harmonization of family and professional life; equal representation of both sexes in decision making processes; elimination of gender based stereotypes and all forms of gender based violence, and promotion of gender equality in foreign and developmental policy.

Introductory speaker believes that the legal framework for gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina is satisfactory, as institutional mechanisms have been established. However, the real life situation is still dissatisfying as "Women's human rights continue to be violated, protection is insufficient, while financial means for providing assistance and support to the victims is symbolic. Bosnia and Herzegovina only fulfilled the first level of its international obligations related to adoption of laws and establishing national mechanisms for gender equality. Although the laws are necessary as the first step towards gender equality, they are certainly not sufficient. We need to work on raising public awareness, disseminating information, educating public about gender equality, but also taking protection measures through establishment and/or provision of support to those services that may assist victims of gender/sex based discrimination, and sexual harassment, both in public and private sphere".

During public discussions in all four local communities, women and men participants shared almost identical views on the issue of gender inequalities in BiH.

They concluded that in the past 10 years a serious step forward was made in the area of legislation development, and implementation of women's human rights. However, this certainly is not enough, as legal provisions should be improved.

Women and men participants were especially interested to discuss issues of gender equality in public and political life, domestic violence against women, and legislation that covers these topics.

One of the recommendations was to initiate changes of the law in order to ensure equal representation of women and men in the management structures of political parties and public companies, and increase of the "female" quota from 30% to 40%.

Participants also pointed at importance of women's political participation, and increasing of women's representation in executive governance. Participants concluded that women are marginalized during pre-election campaigns, and lack of solidarity among female candidates is one of the causes for their bad election results. Some female candidates even lobbied women and men voters to support men, and not themselves, or other female candidates at the election lists. Women are more visible in weaker political parties, and as their power decreases men are leaving, and women are taking over managerial positions.

Women and men participants of the public discussions called members of newly formed local commissions for gender equality to monitor carefully the process of selection and appointment of human resources inside municipal administrations, and to point at the violation of the Gender Equality Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina that requires equal representation in the local management.

Women and men participants welcomed the announced changes of the Gender Equality Law of BiH aimed to improve protection of women in public and private life.

Summary prepared by
Dragana Dardić

SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC DISCUSSION

WOMEN, POVERTY AND WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS

Banja Luka, 10 April 2009

"Women are among those categories of population that are primarily affected by the global economic crisis, and they are first who stay jobless", warned Svetlana Cenic, introductory speaker at the public discussion "Women, Poverty, and World Economic Crisis" held in Banja Luka.

With presenting the current data on position of women worldwide, Ms. Cenic said that women perform 2/3 of working hours, and receive only 1/10 of world income. There are twice more women than men among 900 millions of illiterate world population.

"We have identical situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If parents have to choose who will receive education among children in the family, they always choose a boy, their son. Male child is perceived as a property – he will study, work, and earn money. And where is the place for a woman without education, or one which completed only elementary school!?" asked Ms. Cenic.



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According to Svetlana Cenic, lack of women's mobility is one of the key problems that make women much more vulnerable at the times of great economic crisis. "A woman that stay jobless in Banja Luka and receive a job offer in Mostar, will have difficulties in accepting such an offer, due to lack of ambitions, family obligations, or potential risks that come with taking a job offer in different environment. Men have much less dilemmas in relation to such situations, as women are taking burden of care for family," emphasized Ms. Cenic.

While comparing the old and the new approach to economy, Svetlana Cenic said that "old" perception of economy implied long-term employment, seldom job change, and great industrial giants, such as Cajavec or Incel, in which employees spent their entire employment period.

Contrary to this perception, the new approach means sequential jobs, jobs oriented towards knowledge, and flexible borders between home and work, but also flexible working hours. Ms. Cenic said that women are supportive for this approach.

"I always remember my dad who asked me once what kind of job I have as I do not leave home at 7:00 AM, and return at 3:00 PM", said Svetlana Cenic, and emphasized that women should fight for flexible working hours. .

"A woman knows what her takes is, knows her deadlines, and adjusts her time according to that", said Ms. Cenić. She said that we should lobby for changes of legislative framework to legalize so-called portfolio employment, which would enable women to organize their working hours and obligations alone, and to pay their own taxes and contributions.

"Apart from that, we should work toward enabling the basic economic literacy of women. A woman has to know what gross national income is, and should ask where her money is going", said Ms. Cenic.

"Having a job also means avoiding social exclusion. Women who stayed jobless are becoming introvert; turn to television and watching soaps, and Big Brother style reality shows. They do not have motivation and willingness to leave home", said Ms. Cenic, and added that "we are facing catastrophe, wanting it or not."

"First strike will hit production, and last one administration. Women are among first who will be fired from work", warned Svetlana Cenic, and added is absurd that "women are affected the most, yet rarely raise their voice in the public."

Women and men participants of the public discussion expressed their opinion that "women calculate too much, trying to please either their children or husbands," "they are rarely ready to express their views in the public," "they are afraid of risk too much," and burdened with prejudices and the need to be "good mothers, role model wives and workers".

Miljka Milojević pointed at positive example of a strong and brave woman from Ribnik who was unlawfully fired from work because of her pregnancy. She did not hesitate to tell her story in front of camera of Alternative Television. "Women have to go more in the public, and take over the public sphere. I am convinced that this pregnant woman from Ribnik will win this case, and get her job back, emphasized Ms. Milojević.

Nada Golubović warned that economic crisis would especially affect women victims of violence. "We were succeeding somehow to assist women sheltered in our Safe House. We were succeeding to find them a job, but there are less and less exit strategies", said Ms. Glubovic. Lidija Živanović emphasized lack of state effectiveness in refunding salaries for women on maternity leave.

Milosava Jakovljević said she advocates for the principle of "one woman/man – one working place – one salary". As she explained, "it is not fair that one woman/man is sitting in five management boards and she/he is receiving five salaries for these engagements."

Nevenka Trifković said that women from these areas could take much more on their shoul-

ders "than women in England or Sweden". "A woman is born brave, the only question is how she will take advantage of it", said Ms. Trifkovic.

Sajma Gajetić believes women in Bosnia and Herzegovina are "disunited, uninformed, and inadequately organized."

Commenting on some of the statements of women and men participants, Ms. Cenic said that women need to regain their self-esteem. "One can be publicly heard without membership in a political party", she said.

Svetlana Cenic emphasized advantage of modern technologies in communicating or establishing networks inside Bosnia and Herzegovina and worldwide. She said we should establish networking group to advance exchange of information on available jobs, scholarships etc. "We should no longer wait for others to use all the advantages," said Ms. Cenic.

Final conclusion was that laws should be more flexible to enable environment for part-time jobs, which is more favorable for women's entrepreneurship

Summary prepared by
Dragana Dardić

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INFLUENCE OF ECONOMIC CRISIS ON WOMEN VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Gender based violence is discussed as a global phenomena that predominantly affects women across the planet, and women in Republika Srpska are not immune from it.

Predominant opinion is that roots of violence against women are in patriarchal tradition. With change of gender stereotypes and prejudices, and change of perception about gender roles of men and women in private and public life and decision making, it is possible to gradually influence on diminishing gender based discrimination in general, and violence against women as a form of gender based discrimination.¹⁸

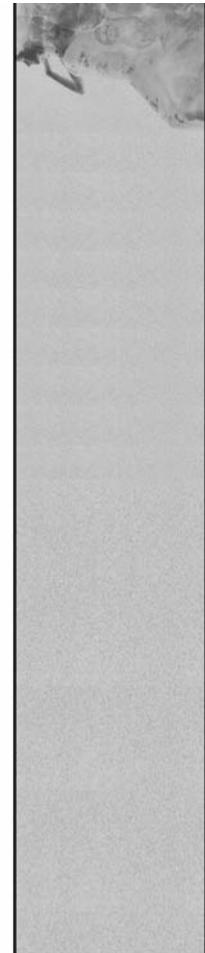
Topic of the public discussion suggests that economic crisis has influence on women victims of domestic violence, also the economic crisis that emerged at the beginning of the last summer. It is interesting fact that the crisis was revealed in the public only when it affected stock markets, banks, and car industries...all "traditionally male" areas of work. We often hear that effects of the current economic crisis are compared with the Large Crisis from 1929.¹⁹ However, in relation to women, current economic crisis did not start last year, but it was only publicly announced on the moment when the states were forced to introduce measures to fight recession, and to place burden on men. According to some very influential theorists in this area, the crisis of neo-liberal market economy concept is visible for a long time. Women were the first affected with the consequences of the crisis. Social welfare states tried to save their economies, and as the first step, they placed burden of a new measures on women – care on aged and care-dependant persons, children, and all those categories of population that previously enjoyed benefits of social services and payments – were among the first affected by crisis. However, nobody talked about recession in that period, but only about so called global economic restructuring. According to the assessments of the United Nations, women and girls in all parts of the world will be especially affected by the economic crisis through social and economic consequences, such are: unemployment, increase of obligations at work and at home, decrease of income, and increase of domestic violence caused by economic consequences.²⁰ Violence against women was not mentioned at all!

Today's we are talking about domestic violence, however I believe it is necessary to emphasize that it represents just one of the forms of gender based discrimination, whose victims in over 95% of cases are women. Forms of gender based violence appear in all life phases of development cycle of a woman, and sometimes even before the birth, such is the case of

18 Pre-draft of the Strategy for Fighting Domestic Violence in Republika Srpska 2009–2011, Gender Center of Government of Republika Srpska, 2009.

19 Andelko Milardović, Individualism and Collectivism, *Vjesnik Online*, <http://www.vjesnik.hr/html/2008/09/26/Clanak.asp?r=sta&c=1>

20 Statement of Sefer Halilović, Minister for Human Rights and Refugees in BiH Council of Ministers, published on 9 March 2009, more information at: <http://www.voanews.com/bosnian/archive/2009-03/2009-03-09-voa5.cfm?CFID=215616364&CFTOKEN=86130158&jsessionid=843066d5a811ec154ad05743bf1824587780>



selective abortion of female fetuses. Gender based violence also appear in early childhood (murders of female newborn babes), during childhood (forcing early marriages, in some cultures, genital mutilation, prostitution), during period of adolescence (rape, sexual abuse, trafficking of women, violence caused by refusal of courtship, sexual abuse at the workplace), during reproductive phase of a woman (domestic violence, rape in a marriage, honor or dowry murders, violence at work, sexual harassment), during older phase of a life (deprivation of the basic health care, abuse and exploitation of widows)²¹....

Approach to the presentation of forms of gender based violence as the global phenomena reveals that violence against women does not represent an incident, but it represents a mechanism to keep women obedient and "at their place" throughout their entire life cycle. The term "gender based violence" refers that affiliation with a specific gender represents the reason why violence happens, and that cases of violence are not incidental episodes, but they represent instruments to keep domination over women through centuries. In their documents, the United Nations are defining violence against women as the product of historically unequal distribution of power between men and women, with female subordination on ideological and material grounds.²² Social institutions are supporting the subordination of women on the level of culture through promotion of desirable norms of behavior and social values. These norms and values are perpetuating subordinate position of women also through ideological influence during process of socialization (family, kindergarten, school...), during which women learn to accept such system, and internalize norms and rules imposed against them as the only possible during their life. Women learn how to act as keepers of traditions, and they participate in its transfer, even punishing of those women who dare to step over borders of socially acceptable women's behavior. Persons that work with victims of domestic violence know well that parents, relatives and friends are providing support to women during period they endure violence. Although the most needed, as a rule, support of family and friends is missing when these women decide to stop the violence. This happens because gender relations are tightly embedded in culture, ideology, all social structures and systems that are difficult to change. All attempts of work on empowering of women victims of domestic violence are usually perceived as the attack on the basic social values, undermining family as the basic social cell, call for divorces. Empowering of women victims of domestic violence meets resistance and lack of understanding from wider social environment.

This also demystifies the reasons why majority of women decide to speak up and admit they are victims, do not want to endure more, and seek for help and protection of their rights after many years of being exposed to violence. Although there are laws that recognize right of women to live free from violence, experiences of women that approached to the public institutions to seek for protection tell us they are not satisfied.²³

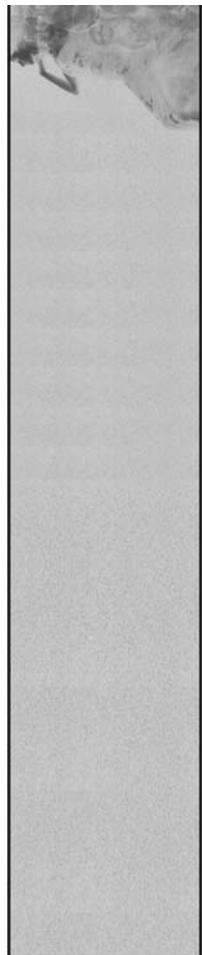
Obligation of the states to protection right of women to live free from violence derives from

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²¹ Natalija Petrić, Influence of Legal Regulations on Protection of Women from Gender Based Violence, Master Thesis, University of Sarajevo, Center for Inter-disciplinary Graduate Studies, 2007, page 12

²² Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, United Nations, General Assembly, 1993, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>

²³ Natalija Petrić, Ibid, pages 80-84



numerous international, regional, and national legal documents²⁴, those that are obligatory, but also political documents whose scope cannot be measured only with possibility of getting unfavorable judicial decisions for the states. Consequences of lack of implementation of these documents can also be negative political points on the international scene, even in those areas that traditionally are not related to the gender equality. Level of democracy development can not be measured only with counting of adopted laws and strategies, but also with real position of the state toward gender equality, and services provided for women survivors of domestic violence. Experiences of the Safe House in Banja Luka, as one of the services for women victims of domestic violence, in cooperation with the governmental institutions are ambivalent. This especially having in mind our advocacy work aimed for recognition of domestic violence as socially intolerable behavior, its prohibition by laws, and adequate implementation of these laws in the practice. We also advocated for support in buying the Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence and providing financial support for its running costs through the public budgets, as we strongly believe that local authorities and not foreign donors are obliged to cover these costs. This represents durable process, with many challenges, good results, but also failures. Regardless of occasional lack of understanding and frequent tendentious messages that we are receiving from some representatives of governmental institutions, we are not giving up from our fight for protection of women's human rights, and especially the right of women to live free from domestic violence. We would not give up from this cause, even if the law would prohibit our work. We are requesting from the Government and all other institutions not to give up, and disqualify initial positive steps they made in this direction. We offer our assistance – we have human capacities educated for work with women

24 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed on 9 May 2008, <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>>; CEDAW/C/BIH/CO/3, Final Comments: Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2006, accessed on 11 April 2008. <www.arsbih.gov.ba/download.aspx?id=438>; General Recommendation 19, Committee of Discrimination Against Women, University of Minnesota, Human Rights Library, accessed on 2 February 2008. <www1.umn.edu/humanrts/gencomm/genrec19.htm>; Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, United Nations, General Assembly, 1993, accessed on 3 February 2008 <<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>>; Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to the Member States on Protection of Women from Violence, and Memorandum with Explanatory Notes, Autonomous Women's Center, Belgrade, accessed on 30 May 2007, <<http://www.womenngo.org.yu/images/Rec%282002%295.pdf>>; European Parliament Resolution on the Current Situation in Combating Violence Against Women and Any Future Action (2004/2200(INI)), European Parliament, texts adopted by the Parliament, accessed on 10 May 2008, <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=/EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2005-0404-0-DOC+PDF+V0//EN>>; Resolution 1512 (2006), Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, accessed on 11 May 2008, <<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/Eres1512.htm>>; Gender Equality Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Official Gazette of BiH, No. 16/03, Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed on 11 April 2008, <http://www.arsbih.gov.ba/Upload/SC/Zakon_o_ravnopravnosti_spolova_bihŠ1Č.pdf>; Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, No. 118/05, Banja Luka 2005; Law on Changes and Amendments of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, No. 17/08, Banja Luka, 2008; Resolution on Fighting Against Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed on 11 April 2008, <http://www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/Source/bih_resolution_jan2008_en.pdf>; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, University of Minnesota, Human Rights Library, accessed on 3 February 2008; <<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/e5dp1w.htm>>; Blueprint of the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence Against Women, including Domestic Violence, Committee of Ministers, Strasbourg, 2006, accessed on 10 January 2008 <http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Equality/ PDF_EGTFV_2006_8_blueprint_E.pdf>; Criminal Law of Republika Srpska, Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, No. 49/03, Banja Luka, 2003.

victims of violence and protection of women's human rights in general. We are offering partnership, as we have invaluable experiences in this area. We are expecting from the institutions to respect us, and support our joint efforts on fighting domestic violence – timely and adequate, in the practice and declaratively.

Let me emphasize once again – domestic violence happens in all cultures and countries, regardless of state organization, religion, or any other differences. Domestic violence happens also in the rich countries, with strong economies, equally as in the countries whose economies are at risk regardless of current economic crisis, in First and Third World Countries, in countries in transition, in countries that hold political and economic power in their hands, and those countries that are still in situation to seek for assistance.

Banja Luka, 5 June 2009

SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC DISCUSSION

CONSEQUENCES OF ECONOMIC CRISIS FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Public discussion, held in Banja Luka on 5 June 2009 focused on discussion about impacts of economic crisis on women and children victims of domestic violence. Women and men participants adopted several conclusions aimed to propose solutions for overcoming challenges in financing of the safe houses for women and children victims of violence in Republika Srpska. Participants of the public discussion initiated establishing of the Intervention Fund for Supporting Women and Children Victims of Violence, and called local communities to implement the law and plan and allocate financial resources needed for work of the safe houses. Allocated financial support should not be less than 30% of total needed budgets for the safe houses, and local communities should not reduce legally foreseen means for this purpose, or make budget savings at the expense of victims of violence.

Participants of the public discussion appealed to the Government of Republika Srpska to carry out on regular basis their legal obligation of providing 70% of needed financial resources for work of the safe houses.

In her introductory presentation, Natalija Petric, Legal Advisor of United Women Banja Luka said that global economic crisis has been publicly proclaimed only after hitting traditionally male jobs, such as banks, stock markets, and car industries.

"However, the crisis began much earlier, and women were among the first who were affected, as the first cost savings were done in the sphere of social contributions," said Natalija Petric. She emphasized that gender based violence represents a global phenomena that sometimes strikes women even before they are born.

"Gender based violence happens in all developmental cycle phases of women's lives – from selective abortion of female fetuses, murders of female newborns, genital mutilation, forced early marriages, rape, sexual abuse, honor or dowry murders" said Ms. Petric. She emphasized that domestic violence does not happen as incident, but represents a mechanism for holding women in subordinate position and "at their place" throughout their lives.

When talking about the issue of financial support for the work of the safe houses for women and children victims of violence in Republika Srpska, Natalija Petric said that United Women Banja Luka have been trying for several months to get an answer from the Government of



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Republika Srpska in relation to financial means in the RS entity budget that are planned for this purpose. "We were always receiving oral answers that this was the time of crisis and some other things had priority," said Ms. Petric.

"We would always receive oral, never written answers. This represents the evidence for lack of responsibility of individuals in governmental institutions, and show their attitude towards the public and non governmental organizations," emphasized Natalija Petric. She said objective of this public discussion is to identify solutions and models to overcome these and similar situations, which, at one stage, led to the closing of the Safe House in Banja Luka.

Jelena Milinovic, Representative of the Gender Center of RS Government emphasized that certain progress has been made, "having in mind that 12 years ago, domestic violence remained in the sphere of a private issues. Nowadays, we have the institutional framework that regulates this issue." Ms. Milinovic added that legal framework in the area of domestic violence needs to be improved, and Government of Republika Srpska has responsibility to implement its provisions, and fulfill all obligations in this area.

Miroslav Samardzic, Financial Manager from United Women Banja Luka said it is "absurd that after six months since beginning of the year, Government of RS provides financial support that only allows covering the debts from the previous period and paying two out of five salaries due to the Safe House Banja Luka employees".

"This is a room for crying, as all of us who are aware of real problems in this area came today, while those who are responsible to solve the problems did not show up," emphasized Miroslav Samardzic.

Commenting on the proposal to establish the Fund for Women and Children Victims of Violence, Aleksandra Petric, Human Rights Advisor from United Women Banja Luka said it should be clearly regulated that this Fund would represent only temporary solution, and that its establishment does not release Government of Republika Srpska from the responsibility to implement the law.

Women and men participants intensively discussed possible usage of financial resources collected into the Fund. Some of the proposals were to use it for ensuring exit strategies for women victims of violence, and as a temporary assistance in the situations where Government of RS fails to implement its obligations.

Lidija Zivanovic, Executive Director of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka suggested that we should organize a separate meeting to define ways for collecting and usage of financial resources from the proposed Fund.

Gordana Vidovic, Executive Director of Citizens' Association Future Modrica said more efforts should be invested in the raising public awareness of women and men citizens about existence of institutional mechanisms for protection of their rights. She added that situation in the Safe House for Women and Children in Modrica was also difficult, and they succeeded to overcome it only thanks to the foreign donations.

Senior officials of RS Government were invited for the public discussion. However, they were not able to attend the discussion due some previously arranged obligations.

Summary prepared by
Dragana Dardić

STEREOTYPES AS THE CAUSE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Violence against women represents one of the most severe violations of women's human rights. UN Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence as *any act of violence based on gender, and which has the consequence or there is probability of having for the consequence in physical, sexual, or psychological damage or harm of women, including threats with such acts, coercion or unlawful deprivation of a liberty, regardless if it happens in a public or private sphere of life*.²⁵

My intention is not to deal with theories about causes of violence against women, but I would like to emphasize that there are several theoretical approaches dealing with phenomena of violence against women and its causes. In this text, I am starting from the feminist approach to violence against women that emphasizes unequal distribution of power between women and men based on the authority of men and supported from all institutions of the system.²⁶ However, during the period of past several decades, these institutions of the system are trying (under pressure or without it) to identify the best way of institutional response on violence against women through creation of the legislative framework that protects women and girls and ensures their life without violence. We in Bosnia and Herzegovina are witnessing the process in which institutions of the system are adopting laws to prohibit violence against women and girls. Although most of the actors that are working on the protection of women and girls from violence agree that we have good legislative framework in this area, lack of its implementation represents big issue. United Women Banja Luka identified one of the reasons for that during our fieldwork. We identified lack of sensibility among women and men citizens and public servants, which resulted with selective implementation of provisions of the law that are confronting deep-rooted stereotypical opinion that women should be silent and suffer, and that she was not beaten without any reason.

United Women Banja Luka is aware of all harmful consequences of stereotypes, and especially their clear influence on violence against women and girls. This is the reason why we initiated the project aimed for assessing influence of stereotypes on behavior of boys and girls high school students, and their education about the fact that gender stereotypes are leading to violence against women and girls. These are some of the statements that we collected from boys and girls participants in five high schools from five local communities in Republika Srpska (Banja Luka, Gradiška, Derventa, Višegrad, Trebinje):

When I get married, my wife will work, of course, but it is well known what is her job at home!!!

25 www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/violence.htm, accessed on 29 November 2009.

26 Group of Authors, *Gender Stereotypes as the Cause of Violence Against Women and Girls*, Banja Luka, 2009



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My mom takes care about ironing, cooking, washing, raising children, and my dad solves big issues!!!

My dad helps my mom at home, but nobody should see that because people would say he is henpecked!!!

What is allowed to a man is not allowed to a woman!!!

Slapping sometimes gets her "in line"!!!

Women are teasing, so a man has to punish them!!!

Male child is more welcomed than female child!!!

Early pregnancy is shameful for woman and her family!!!

I have right to change female partners – my girlfriend does not have the right to change male partners!!!

The main social role of a woman is to be a mother!!!

My dad is the one who decides with whom we will make friendships. I am the one who decides in my relationship with a girlfriend!!!

Unfortunately, these responses reflect the scope of the consequences in relation to gender based stereotypes in our society. These stereotypes are so much rooted in our environment, so they shape our behavior since early ages. Data collected during this field research completely confirmed this assumption. Since their birth, children are directed to their gender through selection of clothes, toys, and activities on which they are directed by their parents during early childhood period. Although these actions look harmless, such activities of parents which direct girls to help their mothers in a house and prepare them for their future roles of mothers, and showing boys they were more welcomed since their birth, are leading to eruption of violent statements and approval of violence during period of adolescence. Statements of some high school boys from one of the local communities exemplify how widespread is this approval of violence. In 80% of cases, they approve physical violence and punishing of their female partners. Women are perceived as softer, weaker, more sensitive, while men are those who have power. Women are more oriented to service jobs in social sector, health, and education, while male professions are related to power and strength, so they are directors, politicians, and leaders. Family, peers, school, and entire society are teaching girls and boys about patriarchal social relations that are based on female subordination and male domination. Mothers are teaching their girls to tolerate many things because of children and peace in a family, although men would not tolerate the same things to them.

Gender based violence represents part of the process of socialization of both boys and girls. Our society supports existing patriarchal model, and this fact causes that gender based violence is not recognized during early childhood.

With placing emphasis on the sphere of education, we can make a progress in overcoming gender based stereotypes and violence. In this phase, introducing such model would lead not only to gender sensitive education of school age children but also their families. Comments of boys and girls, as well as everyday violence that is happening in our schools are warning us that we should initiate some activities in this field. This is warning sign not only to public institutions that are working on education and protection of women's human rights, but also to all of us to change our behavior and influence on diminishing gender based stereotypes in our society, and elimination of gender based violence against women and girls.

Banja Luka, 8 December 2009

STEREOTYPES AS THE CAUSE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

According to introductory speaker Minja Damjanović, an activist of United Women Banja Luka, there are several theoretical approaches dealing with phenomena of violence against women and its causes. „I am using the feminist approach which recognizes violence against women as the consequence of unequal distribution of power between women and men”, said Minja Damjanovic, and added that gender based stereotypes that are deeply rooted in our society are contributing to violence against women.

„We are aware of negative influence of gender based stereotypes on behavior and attitudes of women and men. This is principal reason why we initiated the project, whose objective is to assess influence of stereotypes on behavior of boys and girls high school students, and educate them about the fact that gender based stereotypes are leading to violence against women and girls”, emphasized Minja Damjanovic. She said the research has been implemented on the sample of hundred (100) boys and girls high school students in five high schools in Banja Luka, Gradiška, Derventa, Višegrad and Trebinje.

„We reached disturbing results. Based on responses of boys and girls students, it is clearly visible that children are directed to their gender since early childhood, through selection of clothing, presents, and activities on which they are directed by their parents since early childhood. Boys are directed to engage in some sport activities, and girls are directed to take dancing classes, studying foreign languages, and household activities”, explained Ms. Damjanović. With using these models, boys and girls are taught about their gender roles and what is acceptable and not acceptable behavior in one patriarchal society.

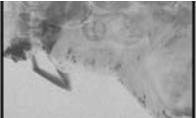
„Especially disturbing answers were given on the question „what is the role of a woman in society? ” Almost all boys and girls that participated in the research responded that key role of a woman is to be mother,” said Minja Damjanović. She sees the way to diminish gender-based stereotypes in “engendering educational plans and programs and educational cadre.” In discussion that followed introductory presentation, women participants of the public discussion said that research results presented by Minja Damjanović should not be ignored. They said it is necessary to appeal on educational institutions and all women and men citizens to act „as we all should ask ourselves how we are educating our children, and what the basic values we are sharing with them are”.

Jasna Zečević, Executive Director of Vive Zene from Tuzla said “she caught herself educating her children in stereotypical way”, as she is saving her younger son from household duties, while she was directing her older daughter to clean the house since early childhood.

Nuna Zvizdić, Director of Women to Women from Sarajevo asked herself what is happening with our daughters as „they are so easily accepting slaps nowadays.” „Eradicating stereotypes requires also our personal change, ”said Nuna Zvizdić.

„Do we have same criteria for our daughters and sons?” This was the question raised by several women participant of the public discussion. Sabiha Komnenić returned the attention on „inadequate educational system that remained unchanged. Homeroom classes are just formally organized, and do not represent a forum for discussion about problems that place burden on children, especially girls who do not have anyone to talk to about their problems.” Dragan Čavić said this issue should be addressed on legislators and institutions of a system. „I am also a father of one daughter. I have wife and mother, who is still alive, thank



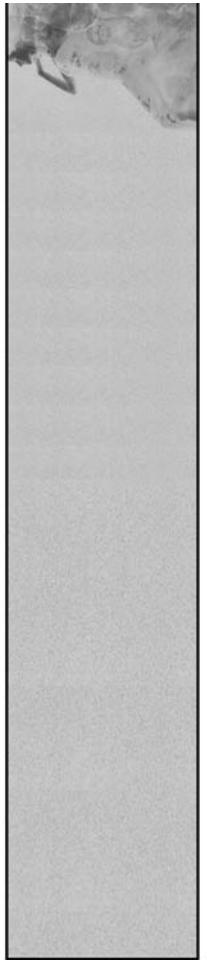


God for that. I must admit I do have difficulties to overcome some attitudes that were rooted in my reality during childhood, "added Dragan Čavić.

Women participants of the public discussion concluded that the ministries of education at all levels should be reminded on their obligation to provide educational plans and programs that are guaranteeing promotion of gender equality and elimination of stereotypical portrayal of male and female roles in a society.

Summary prepared by
Dragana Dardić

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REGIONAL ROUND TABLE

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FROM THE LOCAL TO REGIONAL DIALOGUE WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

Banja Luka 21 – 23 October 2009



INTRODUCTORY PANEL PRESENTATIONS HOW MUCH AND HOW WE COOPERATED ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

LJILJANA RAIČEVIĆ

Safe Women's House, Podgorica, Montenegro

Introduction

During past ten years, regional cooperation in Southeastern Europe is generally positive. This is my conclusion without additional reserves. When we were opening the Shelter in 1999, who would think that we would have significant partnership and cooperation with the local institutions, or we would be a part of the regional network with the strong European institutions. Police cycles from recently adversary countries in the region have joint actions to fight organized crime, search for missing girls in human trafficking chains, arresting abusers from a family who recently fled to neighboring country. Cities in border areas are competing with harmonized projects on European and other international donors' tenders. Picture of the region changed in the real sense. Not all things are nice, easy and smoothly in relation to establishing cooperation. There are many more challenges and obstacles – statutory and constitutional issues in several countries, weak institutions, unfinished structural adjustments in judicial and prosecutorial sector, poverty and unemployment, growing social and regional differences, unstable international position, bad image of the region, and in relation to that, high risk of life. However, regardless to all of that, we can hardly deny the claim about positive results of a regional cooperation, at least from our point of view. Nongovernmental organizations were the first to initiate regional cooperation and networking, which showed very efficient throughout a past period.

More than a decade, local and regional cooperation is contributing to the establishment of trust of the European Union toward our countries. This model largely follows experiences of Nordic, Baltic, and Central European countries, although many regional initiatives emerged and they gathered larger or smaller groups of countries in the region, depending from the key area of gravitation (Central European Initiative, Black See Economic Cooperation, and Initiative for Cooperation in Southeastern Europe, Adriatic–Ionian Initiative, and process of cooperation between Danube countries). Process of cooperation in Southeastern Europe and Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe had a special role in the processes of regional cooperation, and they largely focused on the former Yugoslav republics and their immediate neighbors in the Southeastern region. First of those two initiatives enabled and encouraged development of political dialogue, while Stability Pact had great support of the European Union, and focused on developing cooperation in numerous areas important for citizens, some special social groups, marginalized groups, issues of human trafficking, violence against women and children, economy, strengthening administration or local communities in the region.

Our cooperation and presence on numerous meetings of the Regional Center for Fighting of the Trans–Border Crime (*SEC* Center, in Bucharest); Regional Anti–Corruption Initiative (*RAI*, in Sarajevo), Southeastern Europe Police Chiefs Association (*SEPCA*, in Sofia); Regional Initiative for Migrations, Asylum, and Refugees (*MARRI*, in Skopje); and Southeastern Europe Prosecutors Advisory Group (*SEEPAG*, in Belgrade) speak in favor that actors of these interests and political will are not just politicians and statesmen.

Civil society in the region has great role and responsibility – educational, cultural and religious institutions, media and nongovernmental organizations, associations of entrepreneurs and worker's associations.

We should not neglect their power to influence development of a new climate in the region, but also building relations with other European and international partners. European Union is placing emphasis on strengthening this dimension of regional relations. Although it generally represents intergovernmental multilateral framework, the Council for Regional Cooperation perceives civil society in the Southeastern Europe as one of its key partners in developing, implementation, promotion, and re-assessment of its activities.

Safe Women's House is one of the organizations that cannot act alone; we are stronger and more efficient when we are in the network.

Here is the short reminder who we are, what we do, and who our beneficiaries are, and numbers show our inter-connection.

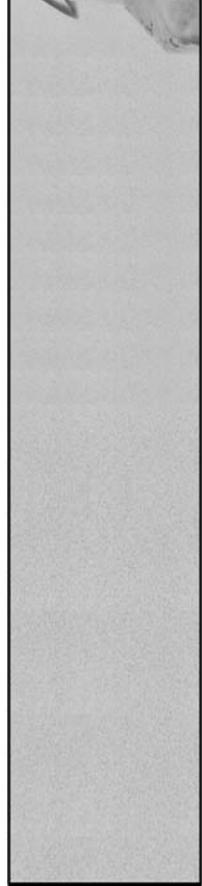
Domestic Violence in Montenegro

Domestic violence represents one of the most visible and widespread violations of women's and children's rights in Montenegro. One of the main causes of domestic violence in Montenegro is patriarchal system that dictates position and relations of partners in a community. Men are taught to take over leadership roles in a family, while women are expected to be obedient and respect will of a man. Such hierarchy exceeds frames of a family, and is present in all aspects of life: in religious and educational institutions, governance, sport, and various social activities, and directly leads to usage of violence against women. In the same time, violence represents taboo – both for a society and for a victim. It is believed that violence represents a private issue, in which society should not interfere. This represents one of the key factors why women stay in violent relationships – they believe that violence they are exposed to be shameful, for both them and their families, and are afraid of condemnation of a society if they file for divorce. Second cause of violence against women and children is poverty. Women are often economically dependant from their partners, and even if they want to leave violence relationship, they often cannot afford that. Montenegro has the law that adequately secures and protects a victim of domestic violence. However, the law is still not implemented in the practice, or is implemented in a very small percentage of cases, so women who leave abusers are at the street, without possibility to sustain themselves and their children.

Safe Women's House

Safe Women's House offers the opportunity for women to stop suffering from violence through providing safe shelter, emotional support, and physical security. Women in shelter are passing through very challenging rehabilitation process. Physical injuries are healed after a while, but it takes years to heal psychological scars. Women in shelter learn how to overcome their problems from the past and how to deal with issues related to their future.

Counseling and psychological assistance are available to women victims of violence five days a week. Once a week, we are organizing workshops for all women and children in the shelter. When a woman contacts us to ask for a shelter, a psychologist initially interviews her with a presence of additional staff member. Special programs are organized for children in a shelter. Assistance of the attorney is available if a victim decides to file a petition for divorce or partition of property. There is also telephone available to the victims of violence 24/7, and it is advertised in all newspapers under column "Important Phone Numbers" 069 013 321. Additionally, this phone number is visible in all police stations.



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It is important to emphasize that women who stay in the shelter in the same time help each other through exchange of experiences. It is very important that they have someone to talk informally, a person that would understand what she was going through as she experienced similar problems. Such exchange of experiences enabled victims to see and understand violence as wider social issue and not only private family matter. In a period before leaving violent relationships, women were isolated, they did not talk about violence they were exposed, and were hiding reality from themselves and other people – finding excuses for abuser, seeking for personal guilt, feeling shame, and not understanding that roots of violence are in social position imposed against them with patriarchal laws and not in their personality or behavior. With support and understanding of other victims, women victims of violence build their courage to initiate independent life.

Data About Victims of Domestic Violence That Searched Assistance from the Safe Women's House from 1999 to 2009

Since 3 August 1999 until 3 August 2009, 2626 persons were sheltered in the Women's Safe House. Duration of their stay in the shelter varied from one day up to 18 months.

Persons that were sheltered in the Safe Women's House were coming from different social structures and national affiliations. Hundred and seventy-three (173) victims of violence came to the shelter from refugee camps, forty-nine (49) women with children were also refugees that are not living in the camp. We were receiving assistance for these women from UNHCHR and HELP. Ninety-five (95) victims of violence from Serbia, and hundred and sixty-four women refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia came to the shelter upon recommendation from various women's NGOs, or reading about our activities.

Four (4) women victims of violence came to our shelter from Germany, four (4) women from Austria, two (2) women from Sweden, a woman victim from Slovenia, and three-member family from Mongolia. These women are in constant danger from violent former husbands or partners, and came to the shelter through intervention of humanitarian organizations.

Eighty-two (82) single mothers were accommodated in our shelter. They were asking for our assistance through staff of a local hospital or center for social work. Some of these women came to the shelter in late months of their pregnancy.

Twenty-six (26) girls were accommodated in the shelter from neighboring countries – Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Republika Srpska, Romania, and Croatia. They came to the shelter based on recommendation of likeminded organizations from other countries.

Problems that we experience with these women are their documentation and health insurance. Cooperation with likeminded NGOs was often the only real assistance they received. Single mothers usually stay in the shelter longer than other women do as families are often rejecting them because of shame. In many cases, family members do not want to have any communications with them. In this moment, we have one girl with newborn baby in the shelter; they just came out of a hospital.

Forty-eight (48) of these girls started independent life, (4 girls are refugees and now live abroad, and they are independent with permanent jobs), 10 women returned to their families, 4 girls (2 girls live with their common law partners). One girl left shelter without notice and left her baby (that is latter accommodated to the Children's Foster House in Bijela, and three additional babies had the same fate). Two (2) children were born from incestuous relationship – fathers raped their mothers. These women had difficulties to recover from trauma and still communicate with us from time to time.

Two thousands seventy hundred and fifty nine (2759) persons searched for our assistance through

telephones 232 352 and 231 153. Unfortunately, we did not keep records for calls on the cell phone.

Office of the Safe Women's House runs marital and pre-marital counseling. Since 2002, four hundred and sixty seven (467) persons used these services. Majority of women that approached us for advice or psychological assistance are victims of domestic violence. Hundred and twenty nine (129) married couples that were facing crisis or marital problems were coming or still visit for counseling sessions. Ninety-seven (97) couples that are planning to marry but are hesitant to doubtful about success of their relationship approached to us for assistance. Hundred and nineteen (119) persons individually came and asked for the assistance, and forty-four (44) of them were children.

ŠUHRETA DUMANIĆ

Skills, Opatija, Croatia

Gatherings like this conference in Banja Luka are the opportunity for looking back, summing up experiences and results, but also raising important questions.

In relation to work of women's groups, it seems useful to start with some facts, as the one that women's groups emerged during 90ties in Croatia (apart from those groups rooted in feminist and intellectual initiatives), mostly have two (2) sources:

- Peace Initiatives

In the eve of the war, peace initiatives emerged in the area of former Yugoslavia. These initiatives had different names – we established Antiwar Campaign of Croatia, Center for Antiwar Action was working in Belgrade, Center for Peace in Sarajevo ... but they were also many other groups, everywhere, and there were many initiatives. Shortly saying – these groups consisted mostly from women. Latter, during the war, these women continued civil activism in different areas.

- Work with refugees and displaced women

Great contribution of women's groups was visible through their assistance for women refugees, with support of women from other countries in Europe and USA. Unfortunately, this great potential was not used latter for cultural change toward pacifism, this was often just humanitarian assistance, but also refugees were terribly scared – our success was to help them calm down and start to live normally again. Lipparini wrote a book about it 'With Other Roads/Per Altre vie', which is one of the rare testimonials of this activism.

After the war, we have process of separation of those women's organizations that professionalized their work – I would say they are doing some important strategic things for a society – but the largest number of women's groups remained on voluntary basis, and these are often very dynamic associations, fast and efficient in reacting on social problems and needs. At the end of 90ties, with creation of the *Women's Ad Hoc Coalition for the 1998 Elections*, we are witnessing the first forms of something that will soon become Women's Network of Croatia. In several years of its existence, Women's Network of Croatia accomplished visible results on raising awareness of a society about violence against women, gender equality, shortages of the laws, etc.



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Despite all these efforts, durable and systemic activities, this engagement will soon be forgotten, because:

1. It did not leave clear marks in collective awareness of a society (having young generations especially abridged)
2. It was not publicly valued, on the way that was assessed in Croatia like it happened abroad (especially efforts of civil society groups during the war), as the peace building effort in a future
3. It was not sufficiently and clearly visible within international framework, and
4. It does not have live and everyday effects on social processes, especially on processes of education of youth people (on institutional and non-institutional way).

In this context, I believe there is an urgent need for public re-valorization of peace initiatives from the beginning of 90ties in Croatia and other countries of former Yugoslavia. This could be the important moment of education and direction for activities on building culture of peace and nonviolence, which are so important for future generations.

In relation to pacifism, it seems that we in the area of former Yugoslavia all made the full circle and returned – I would not say back where we started, as this is not retrograde process, but rather a new beginning – on the topics whose need is recognized by more people than fifteen years ago. The war strengthened violent dimensions of our traditions, and in modern times, this is accompanied with some changes where such behaviors show to be destructive for individuals and society. Here I point at lost of empathy, growing egoism, materialistic values, and context in which violent culture cannot survive without large-scale destructive consequences, and really create a threat of blocking normal functioning of persons, families, groups, and societies as a large. Conflict model of a social functioning is leading to permanent mutual oppression, over-playing, manipulations, and usage of violence. Here we should add well-known fact that the society is still burdened with fresh traumas from the period of conflict, times that undoubtedly left us legacy of legitimate usage of force in conflict resolution.

Civil society organizations unfortunately did not escape this closed circle of mutual oppression, although they, by definition, should contribute to harmonization and calming down of social tensions and conflicts. Although there are associations that are directly working on education for nonviolence, and many women and men activists are learning such methods, their number is not sufficient in relation to real needs. These needs are especially big when it comes to group – team work (working in a group/team or with a group/team) with objective of positive social changes.

In relation to women's organizations – we need one new Bon Ton, one guide through our relations, because culture of nonviolence, as well culture of violence can be reached through learning. *Maria Di Renzo*, authoress of numerous texts and trainer of nonviolence is witnessing this on a great way, through monitoring tradition of modern movements, and making synthesis of Gandian Peace 'doctrine' and activism that is characteristic for western societies.

I would like to use this opportunity to remind that each society, ours as well, has huge historic resources of nonviolent, peace culture, those embodied in art folk customs, but there is lack of interest for its research and preservation. Therefore, during the war we had one absurd situation that our friends, women and men from Germany and USA were teaching us about this culture, and we were recognizing just small tracks of our own customs. Does anyone recall 'peace councils'? These were bodies in local communities (long time ago this probably had a different name), with three to four members, who were visiting houses where spouses had a conflict, and were reconciling them. Peace council members were also intervening,

for example, when two neighbors were having a quarrel – *peacekeeping, life in peace was highly valued for community life.*

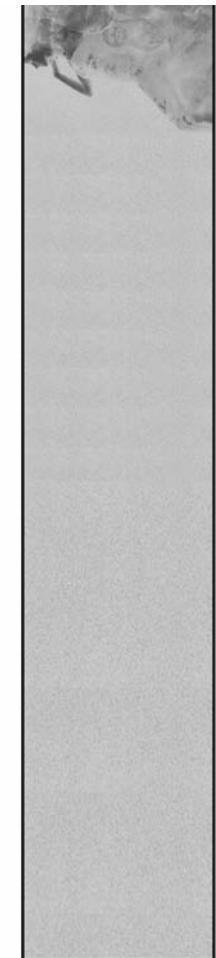
Activism, work ‘for common good’ was and always will be matter of personal choice, decision, and vocation. Nobody should be paying this bill but us. Because of the war, it happened that we survived thanks to that work and activism. That is neither a payment nor reward. The most important motivation here for engagement is the need to do something good, positive, useful for the community and human, for your gender.

When you engage in public work with such motivation, than you enter the core of human issues, how difficult is to be good.

Looking from the distance it is clear this was great and very painful school of life, painful as giving birth. We should not be sorry because of this, because a woman knows this pain is quickly forgotten. Second important thing to be mentioned here is one moral category. It is imperative for women and men intellectuals to engage when grounds of culture, civilization, and humanity are shaken and endangered. In former Yugoslavia, we all received education thanks to the resources of these people who died during the war, and it is immoral to stay aside and do nothing to save people, to reduce suffering, and establish justice. This is very difficult path, although decision to get involved could be easy, almost spontaneous. You know that, because choosing it gives you strength. We were visiting refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina here in Croatia, and those from Croatia in Serbia, and refugees from this region that fled to Europe. We advocated for their human rights, and we are doing that today as well. We realized the essence of their position, that their basic human rights are violated, their property is stolen, and their family and social relationships are destroyed. These people were erased as human beings, and this was shameful results of wars and war policies.

It is time for us to recognize peace activism as creativity on the level of symbolic intervention in reality – this is important having in mind extraordinary possibilities of expanding influences with using new technologies. Anyhow, peacemaking remained integral part of our work, and it expanded and connected large number of women activists, artists, and women from other professions in the whole region. I am dreaming about it and advocate for building of a strong, efficient peace network of women from the Balkan region, which need strongly to have the objective to change our war cultures into peaceful culture of coexistence and non-violence.

My favorite proverb is “reduce evil and increase well” from Qur'an. Sai Baba has this as instruction “a thing you pay attention to would increase”. Perhaps the most practical proverb is the one I heard from my mother while I was a child, when she was trying to teach me with whom I would make friendship and play „alike welcomes alike”. I like very much one proverb from USA that I heard recently “There is no greater fool than one who follows a fool”. This proverb appeared in the eve of attack on Iraq.





SAVKA TODOROVSKA

National Women's Council of Macedonia, Skopje

1. Role of Women Activists and Women's Nongovernmental Organizations in Process of Protection of Women's Human Rights

- Citizens' organizations are feeling a gap in social space between a family, business sector, political parties, and governmental sector. They gather to accomplish common objectives and interests
- Civil sector should be counterbalance to government, and this means to monitor closely everything that happens in communities and society, and to react

- Although we are now entering the period of a close partnership with government, independence and autonomy of civil sector still should be respected
- Civil sector that is reduced only at providing services and which does not criticize government, does not serve neither citizens nor government



- Within this context, role of women's nongovernmental organizations is to contribute to reaching gender equality, promotion, improving, and protection of women and their rights, improving of their social status through taking certain initiatives and implementation of certain activities



- Their work should be visible, and they should be recognizable in communities. They should monitor governmental policy, to analyze it through lenses of women's rights, and to react on time. They should take initiative to encourage civil sector to react toward protection of women's rights and existing needs.

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2. Achievements, Restrictions, and Possibilities of Existing Networks

- Networking and coalition building is aimed for advocacy, lobbying, and making influence on policy development





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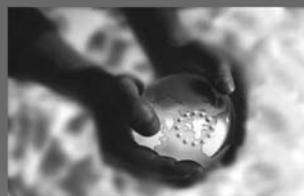
- **How much are women's organizations successful through networking and coalitions in becoming recognizable in communities where they work and influence policy development that affects their work?**
Certainly, responses on this question are different
- Our experience shows that networking of women's organizations and work of big coalitions gives greater legitimacy in work, and greater possibilities for influencing decision makers

The National Council of Women of Republic of Macedonia - SOŽM - is a network of 105 independent women's organizations. This is the largest network that exists in Republic of Macedonia. It represents huge social and human capital, and we are using it to work toward our mission and vision. Certainly to share information, coordinate, and animate organizations members of our network, we need a lot's of time and energy. However, work within nongovernmental sector would not be successful if you can not make to attract large groups of people to support your mission, and accomplish joint vision.



3. Position and Possibilities of Women's Nongovernmental Organizations in Processes of EU Integrations

- **Democracy, rule of law, respecting human rights, respecting and protection of minorities are criteria that states candidates must meet in order to enter the European Union**



- Democracy is not possible without gender equality and without equal possibilities for all. Respecting human rights means respecting women's rights
- Women's nongovernmental organizations should work toward EU integration

➢ Equal possibilities for all, greater participation of women in decision making processes, eliminating all forms of discrimination of women, promoting peace and tolerance, fighting against all forms of violence, improving position of women in a society are key points for focusing work of women's nongovernmental organizations. On this way, we will give our contribution to reaching European standards, and for integration of countries in the European Union

- It is difficult to imagine democratic society and continuous economic growth without full participation of women in all social processes, and without full implementation of their rights in the practice
- Lack of women's participation in a society represents loss for all of us, progress of women is progress for all of us



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JOVANKA BRKIĆ

Autonomous Women's Center, Belgrade, Serbia

WOMEN'S NETWORKS IN SERBIA

"Feminist dreamed her. They wanted her, because we need her. We need the NETWORK because it represents an open space in which are free, and we need each other. We need a space in which we walk next to each other. We need a space in which each of us is autonomous, and network with others, so it strengthens its autonomy. In order to be independent, we need other women. We cannot be strong – and isolated and alone – neither as individual women, nor as organizations. We learned that in work with women that survived violence, and we apply it ourselves."²⁷

Since beginning of 90ties of the last century, women's organizing passes several phases:

- o 1978 – 1990 – the first feminist initiatives: Feminist Group Women and Society, Women's Parliament, Women's Lobby, Women's Party – all in Belgrade.
- o 1991–1997 – the first autonomous women's organizations are founded, mostly in Belgrade. The first SOS telephone has been established, Center for Women's Studies, Women in Black Against War, and many others.
- o 1997– 2000 – autonomous women's nongovernmental organizations are founded also in cities of inner Serbia. Majority of these organizations from both phases were engaged on activities against war and nationalism, offering support and assistance to refugees and displaced persons. In 2000, they actively participated in the pre-election campaign and getting down Slobodan Milošević.
- o 2000–2009 – greatest number of women's nongovernmental organizations was founded, on the initiative of women in Serbia, but also on the initiative of international organizations and foundations that are active in different geographical areas of the country.

Networking and attempts of networking of women's organizations in Serbia were initiated after 1995:

- o Since 1997 **Women Against Violence Network**, organized the first conference with attempt of networking. Participants were SOS telephones of Serbia, and from Banja Luka and Kumanovo. This network did not survive.
- o Since 2005 **Women Against Violence Network** gathers 31 women's organizations from 18 cities in Serbia. This network represents a coalition of specialized women's non-governmental organizations that are providing individual support to women, and work on changing social context in order to decrease violence against women in Serbia. The main objective of this network is to create and strengthen links between organizations and groups that are offering services to women. Organizations in the Network are working on decreasing violence against women in direct work, or indirectly

27 Lepa Mladjenović, Thirst for Networking, in the brochure „Let's Connect in Order to Change”, – the Conference of the Network of Organizations for Work with Women Survivors of Violence in the Area of Serbia and Vojvodina, Belgrade, 2005.

through researches, advocacy for women's human rights, right to life without violence educations, lobbying for law for protection from violence, and other actions. Methodology of work includes SOS telephones, counseling centers, shelters, and safe houses. At the conference held in 2005, we mapped organizations that are working with women survivors of violence. We also identified needs, knowledge, resources, and possibilities of the organizations with the objective of exchange. We created e-mail list for exchange of information and agreed about the basic principles of the Network. In that period, actual topics were (among other) new laws and establishing cooperation with public institutions. Additionally, there were several new SOS telephones founded as a part of the centers for social work through financial support of the Fund for Social Innovations. In the period from 2005 to 2008, we communicated through e-mail list (so called conference Network). Women coordinators were in phone communication with women activists, they were sharing the news on the list, updating list of organizations that are offering services to women survivors of violence. We cooperated during 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. In 2008, we succeeded to get financial resources to organize new Conference of the Network, and it was held in October 2009. Two letters were developed and sent in the name of the Network, in order to react on actual events. Meetings were held with organizations in the Network (Velika Plana, Kraljevo, Kruševac, and Novi Sad) with objective of preparing for development of the Strategic Plan of the Network. We made the Strategic Plan and Rulebook of the Network, and both documents were adopted with small changes on the Conference of the Network. Next activities are to prepare the Strategic Plan and organization of the campaign for the 16 Days of Activism.

- o Since 1997 **Women's Movement – Women's Network**. AWIN's network (Association of Women's Initiative), which worked on promotion of women's cooperatives, and offering initial support to a new founded women's nongovernmental organizations, organized educational trainings and workshops for women members of these associations, and provided them the basic feminist literature.²⁸
- o Since 2002, **Network Women in Black Serbia** gathers more than ten women's organizations that are advocating for values of peace, anti-militarism, and women's solidarity. The Network has been initiated by the feminist anti-war organization Women in Black, which, a few days ago, celebrated 18 years of peace activism, anti-militarism, and work on facing the immediate past.
- o Since 2005, **National ASTRA Network** gathers eleven organizations members that are working on fighting against human trafficking. The network is coordinated by ASTRA – organization committed to fighting against trafficking of people.²⁹
- o Since 2007 **Network Women, Poverty and Development** gathers more than thirty women's organizations for need of advocacy for women's rights in the process of implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy of Serbia. The network is facilitated by Autonomous Women's Center, and appears under name KOCID for Women (Contact Organization of Civil Society).³⁰

28 <http://www.awin.org.yu/srp/azin-intro.htm#04>

29 http://www.astra.org.rs/?page_id=40

30 http://www.womenngo.org.rs/images/Vesti_09/OTVORENO_PISMO_UPRAVI_ZA_RODNU_RAVNOPRAVNOST.pdf



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Regional Networks After 1991

- o From 1992 to 2002 **International Women's Network of Women in Black** was a gathering of women peace activists from the region and Europe while it was difficult to cross the borders, and airports and telephone lines between neighboring countries were blocked.³¹
- o 1997 **Sister from East** was the Conference with attempt of networking of women's specialized organizations that are providing services for women survivors of male violence from the countries of so-called Eastern Europe in wider sense. Women activists from 17 countries participated at the Conference – from Kazakhstan, Moldavia, Lithuania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc. This Network did not take roots.
- o Since 1997 **Network LESBIAN SUNDAY**, held five gatherings with objective of connecting, exchange and empowerment of lesbian activists from Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia. Initiators of this network are lesbian organizations LL and Kasandra from Ljubljana (Slovenia), Kontra from Zagreb (Croatia), and Labris from Belgrade (Serbia). The last meeting was held in Novi Sad in 2007. (Previous meetings – Pohorje Slovenia, Rovinj Croatia, Bečej Serbia, and Ljubljana Slovenia).³²
- o 2007 **Women's Peace Coalition** gathers women activists of the Network of Women in Black Serbia and Kosovo Women's Network (more than 60 organizations). The network had three meetings and still plans joint actions, although this is quite difficult because of political and logistical circumstances (majority of women activists from Kosovo have travel documents that are not recognized by Serbia).³³
- o Since 2008, **Network Against Sexual Violence** founded through joint initiative of Women's Room from Zagreb, Croatia and Autonomous Women's Center from Belgrade, Serbia, with objective of encouraging women SOS consultants for work with women survivors of sexual violence. Plans are to organize additional meetings of the network that gathers women activists from Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia.

Organizations members of these networks are mutually overlapping. There are organizations that are active in several networks because they are satisfying needs for information, partnerships, and other forms of cooperation.

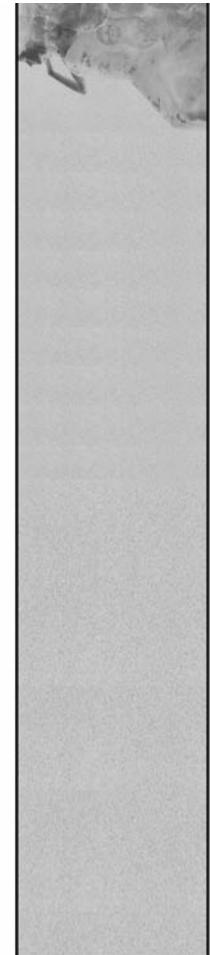
Networks significantly raise legitimacy and credibility united organizations and groups, and make easier:

- Communication with the government, enabling them more efficient influence on public policies,
- Participation in legislative and other initiatives,
- Reactions on negative events in front of public institutions and media,
- Communication with donors,
- More rational usage of resources and capacities,
- Access and distribution of information,
- In education.

31 http://www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5&Itemid=23

32 <http://www.labris.org.rs/info-centar/treaea-lezbejska-nedelja.html>

33 http://www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=199&Itemid=54



Beside that, networks:

- o Empower women through meetings
- o Enable greater flow of information among women activists
- o Motivate women's organizations on growth and new actions
- o Enable expansion of knowledge of member organizations
- o Increase recognition of individual organizations that are part of a network

Networks are capable to raise energy for a short time, and use it for some necessary proactive or reactive activity. There are also some challenges in work of the women's networks:

- Unequal capacities of the organizations and groups
- Too big expectations
- One way communication
- Different conditions for work at the local level
- Tendency toward centralization (on two grounds: largest organization, capital city)
- Unequal engagement in the network
- Fake (instrumental) partnerships – instrumental usage of the network (selective)
- Unequal transparency
- Monopoly on information (selective distribution)
- Lack of services for the network
- Exploitation of the resources by largest organizations in the network

By a definition, networks are gathering "more significant disperse women and men actors in a social space, while each of them as an individual, group or organizations pleads on personal autonomy and independent development of objectives, methods and means to act in given social situation."³⁴ However, this definition does not cover the basic objective of networking of women's and feminist organizations, and that is, above all, empowerment of women, and second, empowerment of women's organizations in order to act through networks on changing social conditions for women. Women's networks are political actions. Women's networks are in front of the social values, they bring changes, and in majority of cases, they have very clear political principles on which they insist. Sometimes, they are only one working, while states are not functional, which is the case with the International Women's Network Women in Black. While there was embargo in Serbia, women peace activists were crossing borders. In the period from 1992 to 2002, women were meeting in Novi Sad on the network *Women's Solidarity Against War*.

Autonomous, independent, and sustainable work of women's groups and organizations is proving their maturity. It is necessary condition for their functioning in some of the non-hierarchical women's NGO networks. However, networks can also gather new founded groups and organizations that are just starting to build their capacities. Networks are probably the most useful and needed for them. Anyhow, horizontal women's networks gather around some priorities in their mission and objectives. Attempts of networking on territorial basis did not show successful, if not organized on the national level.

Networking on multiple grounds is not only objective but also necessary condition for functioning of a civil society. Because of their immanent lack of hierarchy and supporting autonomy of their members (groups and women individuals), networks in women's movement are

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³⁴ Andelka Milić, *Women's Network on the Crossroads of Millennium*, Report About Empirical Research in Serbia and Montenegro, Belgrade: Institute for Sociological Researches of Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade, 2002.



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contributing to disintegration of patriarchal power structures. Despite declarative support for gender equality, having in large misbalance in distribution of a social power, networks are enabling not only flow of information, but also public advocacy and advocating for equal rights of women in all areas. Participation in work of the network increases self-confidence, which is something that majority of women, is missing. It raises consciousness about unity in which differences are respected, teaches usage of modern techniques of communication, and articulate values of common engagement.

BERINA MEHELJIĆ

Foundation CURE, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Women's group from Bosnia and Herzegovina that works for the past fifteen years and continuously accomplishes good results for improving standard of life for women in BiH. In 2008, Foundation CURE implemented the project with title "Reviving of a Women's Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

There is a growing need for unique spot of information about women's groups and organizations that are working for women's human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Foundation CURE is committed to development and strengthening of BiH women's and feminist movement on the long run. This is the main reason why we implemented the project "Reviving of a Women's Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina" during 2008. Objective of this initiative is to create and distribute communication platform that would offer information about groups engaged in the area of women's human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, key areas of their work, and challenges they face in their work. In the same time, plan of the project is to offer educational and creative resources about women's groups that are already available to the public, with using simple and free methodology.

As a part of CURE research about women's groups, we developed a short Study, which shows that majority of groups believe there is no women's and feminist movement in our country. During 2008, women activists of Foundation CURE completed the research, whose direct product is Directory of Women's Groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In total ninety-nine (99) women's organizations completed the questionnaire and this was offered as the information about active women's groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Directory of Women's Groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina is available at web portal <http://zensekegrupebih.fondacijaure.org>.

Based on the response from the field, we identified the areas of need for education – women's human rights (47 questionnaires or 47.7%), economic empowerment of women (53 questionnaires or 53,5%), education about empowerment of young women (38 questionnaires or 38,3%) and psychosocial assistance for women (32 questionnaires, or 32,3%).

Cooperation with other organizations is on the middle level, in relation to local community (51,5%), regional context (48 or 48,5%), in Bosnia and Herzegovina (58 or 58,6%), while there is low cooperation at the international level (53 or 53,5%).

58 or 58,6% organizations believe that Women's Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina is much needed for a quite some time, while one third of organizations think that network is needed, but depending from what this network would do. The research showed positive example that

81 or 81,8% organizations stated they would actively participate in the work of Women's Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina. All organizations stated they are interested for the work of Women's Network of BiH. The most common reasons for participation in the Network can be summed up through "we are stronger together" and there is greater possibility for exchange of experiences and knowledge through the Network.

In the same time, majority of organizations believe that women's movement does not exist as such in Bosnia and Herzegovina (44 or 44,4%), while equal percentage of organizations believes this movement exists, or it exists but lacks visibility – more informal movement. Reasons for such attitude in relation to the existence of women's movement in BiH is opinion that "women's organizations are lacking persistence, "lethargic," "inert" for such movement, that there is no "critical mass of sensitive persons, as well as awareness and belief it is possible to make a change in order to call these forces women's movement". There is similar opinion in relation to existence of feminist movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Around 60% of organizations believe such movement does not exist, while 19% of organizations have opinion that feminist movement exists, but not in some concrete form. Reasons for such attitude are based on opinion that voice of feminism is „still very quiet", „majority of women has an issue to call themselves feminists", and „majority in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not know what this is all about." On the track of improving position of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the organizations identified four priorities on which we should work, and these were offered as potential answers. Majority of the organizations believe the greatest priority issue represents adoption of the state strategy of the budget for economic empowerment of women (42 or 42,4%). The state strategy for greater number of women at decision making in economy and politics represents the second priority (24 or 24,2%), while literacy and education of female children (21 or 21,2%), and deadlines for working results of the state institutions in relation to better life standards of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina (30 or 30,3%), are identified as third and fourth priority.

Women's network in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a space for meeting and mixture of numerous languages, cultures, experiences, knowledge, affiliations, skills, and specialties of women's public engagement.

Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina were working across the borders. They were spreading and vitalizing debates against andocentric concept of power, armed conflicts, and social exclusion as the biggest threats to women's security.

As a part of powerful gender structures in our society, women experienced male violence and multi-level discrimination. This relates to the war period, and times of peace. At the end of 1992, this fact again motivated women to organize concrete actions against insecurity, violence, poverty, unemployment, legislation related to women's human rights, marginalization of rights on elections and needs of minority groups.

Although it was not called the Women's Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this network works on fighting against violence against women, promotion of women's human rights, transformation of relations between sexes and genders, both in private and public sphere.

The network gathers women activist and feminist that are fighting every day a cultural and cognitive configuration of understanding of terms of sex/gender, peace, security, and human rights through drawing in secularity into a space of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is important to emphasize that Women's Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina grows every day with new organizations joining in. Cooperation with women's organizations from the region is on very good level.

One of the problems that Women's Network in BiH is facing represents weak mutual com-





munication, insufficient cooperation, and distribution of activities within women's organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Does this represent certain level of fear from competition – although this must not or should not happen? Ideal thing would be to have distribution of work between the organizations to have balance of activities on awareness rising of women and developing of Women's Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because there are organizations with huge number of activities, so they cannot do everything alone. However, there are also organizations with small number of activities, and it happens they are barely surviving, and shut down at the end. This means that only through common work and mutual assistance through the Women's Network we can help each other, and to those small organizations to survive and continue to fight for women's human rights. If we make and establish good joint communication, we would do much more, and fight for what we should have, and above all, for respect for women's human rights. This is of great importance for all women in our society, country, and the region.

One of the examples of how local organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also those from the region, can accomplish a lot with joint efforts is the Festival of Women's Art PitchWise, which was successfully organized this year in the period from 11 to 13 September. During this Festival, women and men participants had the opportunity to hear and see how women's organizations from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region are jointly working, and what is their priority, and we all know that priority is protection of women's human rights. As Foundation CURE always strived to networking, topics of this PitchWise Festival were related to connecting, networking, feminist work and culture, tolerance, promotion of women's human rights. With this PitchWise Festival, we gathered women artists and activists from women's groups in BiH and neighboring countries. Festival was dedicated to feminist networking and activism, and participants were women artists and activists from Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, France, and other countries in the region and worldwide. They presented socially engaged artwork through performances, a book promotion, concerts, workshops, films, and meetings.

It is important to sat that this year PitchWise Festival was organized in three cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Zenica, Banja Luka and Sarajevo), which clearly speaks how much networking is important for common work. The main objective of the Festival as idea and community of people that are working for gender equality is to make changes in the society through engaged art. One of the ways to bring positive change is to connect, network, practice activism and solidarity. This year, PitchWise was such Festival, as it improved communication between organizations, flow of information reached great level, and this was also the objective of this network, to enable timely share of important information between all organizations.

United Women, Banja Luka

EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY AS EXAMPLE OF NETWORKING ON THE REGIONAL LEVEL

Note: The data available on the web pages of the European Women's Lobby (<http://www.wom-lobby.org>) and the European Action Center for Policies Against Violence Against Women (<http://www.epacavaw.org>) were used in preparation of this overview. It is prepared for presenting in on the Regional Round Table "From Local to Global Dialogue with the European Union," held in Banja Luka from 21 to 23 October 2009, in organization of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka and United Women Banja Luka. It is recommended to visit these pages for more comprehensive introduction.

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) represents the largest umbrella organization of women's associations in the European Union. It coordinates activities of member organizations throughout the European Union. Secretariat of the European Women's Lobby is in Brussels. Organizations members of the Lobby are coming from all 27 countries members of the European Union, and three candidate countries, but also twenty –one large nongovernmental organizations that are implementing their activities in the area of at least 50+1 states members of the European Union.

The European Women's Lobby strives to promote equality of women and men on the level of the European Union. It actively works in different areas, such are: improving economic and social position of women, enhancing participation of women in decision making processes, violence against women, differences between women, etc. The European Women's Lobby mostly works with the institutions of the European Union – European Parliament, European Commission and Council of Ministers of the European Union.

The European Women's Lobby was founded in 1990, and since that period, it organizes its work with taking into consideration needs and perspectives of different women's groups and multi-layer experiences of women from all age groups. This relates both on internal policies of the Lobby, as well as cooperation with organizations that are representing women facing with multiple forms of discrimination in our societies. Everything started in November 1987, when 120 women, members of 85 organizations that represent 50 millions of women individuals agreed about two resolutions and initiated foundation of the European Women's Lobby. The first resolution called for creation of a structure that would be opened for all interested women's organizations, through which the influence will be made on European and national institutions to ensure better protection and representation of women's interests. The second resolution called the European Commission to support organizing of the Lobby.

The mission of the European Women's Lobby is to work on reaching equality of women and men, promoting empowerment of women in all areas of public and private life, and eliminating of all forms of violence against women. The vision of the Lobby is directed toward the European Union of peace and democracy, built on a culture of respecting human rights, equality, peace, and solidarity. The European Women's Lobby is working on equal rights of women and men in order to have equal access to social, cultural, and economic resources, and to



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strengthen personal integrity and choice. Work of the European Women's Lobby is based on the following principles:

- o Equality of women and men in all fields of public and private life;
- o Solidarity with all women and men that are facing exclusion, discrimination and oppressions;
- o Respecting all differences;
- o Parity, especially in decision making processes;
- o Peace, through promotion of peace culture;
- o Justice for all;
- o Empowerment of all women;
- o Cooperation and consensus building;
- o Responsibility toward each other, those we represent, and those who support us;
- o Openness and transparency in communication and working methods, and
- o Independence from any religious, party, or political affiliation.

Objectives of the European Women's Lobby are:

- Supporting active inclusion of women in order to reach equality of men and women, and ensure representation of women from different areas of Europe;
- Supporting national members through sharing information, resources needed for lobbying and training in order to actively engage on shaping policies of the European Union, and implementation of laws on the national level;
- Supporting (through analysis, monitoring, and evaluation) the influence on all areas of policies of the European Union that are having influence on lives of women and promotion of equality of women and men, especially referring to the Road Map for Equality of Women and Men, Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW;
- Monitoring and raising awareness about development and implementation of gender equality policies in order to ensure full inclusion of women's human rights, interests, and perspectives in all areas and in the policies of EU, and
- Taking into consideration needs and perspectives of different groups of women through all phases of life cycle.

Membership in the European Women's Lobby – How to Join?

There are three categories of membership in the European Women's Lobby: full membership, associated membership, and individual supporters.

1. Status of full membership is opened for:

- a. National members/organizations (one organization per state) that are representing various organizations from that state (network) – each can delegate 3 women delegates to the General Assembly of the EWL (including the Main Board). Each organization has three voices. Membership fee for year 2010 is 1000 EUR.
- b. European nongovernmental organizations, which should be present in at least 50%+1 states members of the European Union, European economic area, or countries that are in the process of accession to the European Union. These organizations have the right to send one delegate in the General Assembly, including the Board. Membership fee for year 2010 is 400 EUR.

2. Associated membership:

Status of the associated member can be granted to women's NGOs or women's sections of NGOs that are accepting vision, mission, purpose, and objectives of the European Women's Lobby. These members have access to all information as the full

membership organizations, can participation in lobbying actions, participate in seminars organized by EWL with covering their own expenses, be present at the meetings of the General Assembly as observers, but have no right to vote. Currently, thirty – nine (39) organizations within EWL have this status. Membership fee is 75 EUR.

3. Individual members/supporters:

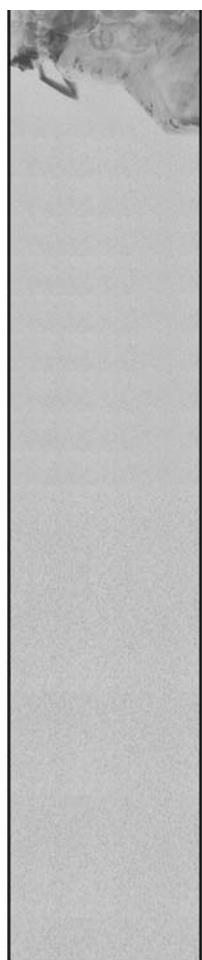
Individual members can join the European Women's Lobby if they accept vision, mission, and objectives of EWL. They have the right to participate at seminars and conferences organized by EWL with covering their own expenses, they receive Newsflash and Newsletter, and information about activities organized by the European Women's Lobby. Membership fee is 30 EUR.

Currently, the European Women's Lobby has thirty (30) national coordinating organizations with the full membership status, as follows:

- Austria – Österreichischer Frauenring
- Belgium – Coordination Belge du LEF
- Bulgaria – Bulgarian Coordination of EWL
- Croatia – Croatian Women's Network
- Cyprus – Cyprus Women's Lobby
- Czech Republic – Czech Women's Lobby
- Denmark – Women's Council in Denmark
- Estonia – Estonian Women's Association Roundtable Foundation
- Finland – Coalition of Finnish Women's Association
- France – Coordination Française pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes
- FYR of Macedonia – Macedonian Women's Lobby
- Germany – Deutscher Frauenrat
- Greece – Coordination of Greek Women's NGOs for the EWL
- Hungary – Hungarian Women's Lobby
- Ireland – The National Women's Council of Ireland
- Italy – Coordinamento Italiano della Lobby Europea delle Donne
- Latvia – Women NGOs Network of Latvia
- Lithuania – Lithuanian Women's Lobby
- Luxembourg – Coordination Luxembourgeoise du LEF
- Malta – Malta Confederation of Women's Organizations
- Netherlands – Netherlands Coordination to European Women's Lobby
- Poland – Polish Women's Lobby
- Portugal – Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres
- Romania – Romanian Women's Lobby
- Slovenia – Women's Lobby for Slovenia
- Slovak Republic – Slovak Women's Lobby
- Spain – Coordinadora Española Para el Lobby Europeo de Mujeres
- Sweden – The Swedish Women's Lobby
- Turkey – National Coordination of Turkey – KADER
- United Kingdom – UK Joint Committee on Women

Throughout the Europe, twenty-one (21) organizations currently have full membership status; and thirty-nine (39) organizations have status of associated members/observers – Foundation CURE from Sarajevo represents Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Objective of the European Women's Lobby is to influence institutions of the European Union



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to implement equality of women and men. Gender equality is related to all fields of life. However, the European Women's Lobby mostly focuses on following areas:

- Women at decision making positions/Parity democracy
- Social policy and employment
- European gender policies and legislation
- Differences between women and anti-discrimination
- Migrations and asylum
- Fundamental rights within the EU
- Revision of the European contracts
- International actions for women's rights/UN
- Violence against women

In reaching these objectives, the European Women's Lobby cooperates with the international institutions, as follows:

- European Commission
- Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
- Council of the European Union
- European Parliament
- Economic and Social Committee, and Committee of the Regions
- United Nations, in general, and it especially has:
 - Advisory status with the UN Economic and Social Council
 - Regular contribution to the Commission for Status of Women (CSW)

External cooperation of the European Women's Lobby with civil society, and especially with following institutions:

- European Platform for Social NGOs
- Contact Group for Civil Society
- Council of Europe: Advisory status with the Council of Europe
- NGO Platform for Asylum and Migration/s

The European Women's Lobby is implementing the activities through:

Lobbying:

- Lobbying activities in all areas relevant for women;
- Through monitoring of the European political agenda/working map, and
- Monitoring of gender relevant policies

Policies and advocacy work:

- Through monitoring of the European political agenda/working map;
- Writing of the positional documents and other statements – in agreement with all members of the European Women's Lobby, and
- Offering expertise for EU institutions and women and men policy makers

Current Projects:

- "Nordic-Baltic Taskforce Against Trafficking, www.nordicbaltic-assistwomen.net, and Activities Related to Informing:

In 2008, the basic budget of the European Women's Lobby was 986,922 €; in 2009, the budget was 977,052 €. From this amount, 82,65% EWL receives in a form of a grant/donation from the European Commission through the Program with title PROGRESS. Rest of 16,35% is realized through membership fees and other independent sources of financing.

Internal organization of the European Women's Lobby is made of the General Assembly, Administrative Board, Executive Committee, Secretariat, and European Action Center for Policies Against Violence Against Women (which was organized as an independent organization in

2007, but still represents a part of the European Women Lobby).

General Assembly meets once a year, and it consists from hundred (100) women delegates of a national and European organizations/members, as well as the associated members. The Assembly makes decisions about program activities, finances, and running urgent issues, participates in the work of Issue Group. Every second year, the General Assembly elects the Administrative Board. This Board consists of forty (40) elected women delegates (30 representatives of full membership national networks/members + ten (10) women representatives of the full membership European organizations/members). The Board meets three times per year to make decisions about activities that should be implemented, about political priorities, etc. Every two years, the Executive Committee elects the Administrative Board, which consists from seven (7) women members, as follows: president, two vice-presidents, treasury keeper, and three (3) women members. The Executive Committee meets on the regular basis, consults in relation to urgent decisions, and represents the European Women's Lobby. General Secretary is managing the Secretariat, which coordinates all organizational activities. Secretariat of the European Women's Lobby is located in Bruxelles. It keeps communication with decision makers, prepares documents and press releases, provides information and report to the members, organizes meetings, implements projects and issues publications. The European Action Center for Policies Against Violence Against Women represents the department of the European Women's Lobby, which became independent in 2007. Objective of the Center is to reach equality of women and men through elimination of violence against women that represents obstacle to empowerment of women; promoting and improving policies of prevention and fighting of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and ensuring full access to human rights for all women. The European Action Center for Policies Against Violence has the task to facilitate and develop work of the Observatory of the European Women' Lobby Against Violence Against Women. Since 1997, it works on elimination of all forms of male violence against women.

SUMMARY OF THE REGIONAL ROUND TABLE "FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL DIALOGUE WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION"

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21 – 23 October 2009, Banja Luka

The Round Table "From Local to Global Dialogue with the European Union" was held in Banja Luka from 21 to 23 October 2009. It resulted with agreement on creation of the Regional Women's Network, which would bring together women's organizations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Macedonia. The Network will be opened for organizations from other countries interested to participate in joint advocacy initiatives toward governmental institutions, and affirmation of culture of reconciliation, non-violence, and equality policies and practices.

Women participants of the Round Table also agreed that one of the first joint activities of the network will be to send a protest letter to the international officials, initiators of Butmir talks on constitutional changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in relation to exclusion of women from this negotiating process.

The Round Table gathered thirty (30) women representatives of women's nongovernmental organizations from the region, with objective to analyze previous forms of cooperation between



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women's groups at the local and regional level. One of the conclusions was that coalitions or networks provide greater legitimacy to their work and they can have greater influence on governmental institutions.

At the beginning of the conference working part, women participants were greeted by Nada Tesanovic, Vice-President of the People's Assembly of Republika Srpska. Ms Tesanovic said that we have many positive achievements thanks to joint and networked activities of women's NGOs, referring to the example of introducing of "women's quota" in the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nada Tesanovic emphasized that women's quota leaded to significant increase in number of women representatives in the Parliament, although women are still underrepresented at all levels.

Women participants from all countries shared their experiences and examples of networking and cooperation.

Ljiljana Raicevic, Executive Director of the Safe Women's House from Podgorica, Montenegro said that her organization would not have been able to do anything without strong cooperation and networking at the local level with nongovernmental organizations in Montenegro, but also at the regional level, with organizations from other countries. She emphasized importance of networking with governmental institutions on the local level. "After the signing of Memorandum on Cooperation with various, we immediately felt improvement. We did not allow this Memorandum to become just a matter of protocol, but we constantly requested from its signatories to implement its provisions in the practice," said Ljiljana Raicevic.

Sura Dumanic, Representative of NGO Vjestine from Opatija, Croatia summed up the history of women's activism in Croatia, stating that the activities of women's groups (except for those earlier who were rooted in feminist initiatives) have two grounds – peace, consisting of associations that opposed the war, and work with refugees and displaced persons, which de facto lead to the emergence of numerous women's groups in Croatia.

According to Sura Dumanic, some of these groups were later on professionalized, and some became "organizations favoring governmental institutions, because they do the same work as for example centers for social work, and are financed from the public budget."

She recalled some of the major coalitions of women's groups in Croatia, such as Women Ad Hoc Coalition, formed prior to elections 1998, which led to the exclusion of HDZ majority from the Government and to a greater percentage of elected women, but also to the creation of Croatian Women's Network. Sura Dumanic warned to the fact that many years long engagement of women's groups was falling into oblivion as it left "no clear traces in the collective consciousness of a society, and because it was not publicly valorized".

Savka Todorovska, President of the National Women's Council – Union of Women of Macedonia (SOZM-NSZM) presented experiences of women from Macedonia. She said that women in this country quickly learned advantages and power of networking. National Women's Council of Republic Macedonia nowadays gathers 105 independent women's organizations (initially called Alliance of Women's Organizations for Macedonia, which was later renamed into National Women's Council, and at first gathered 13 organizations) and it represents the largest network in the country.

"The evidence of how strong we are is the recent survey where women and men citizens were asked what non governmental organizations in Macedonia they were aware of. SOZM was mentioned in the first five listed organizations", stated Savka Todorovska.

Apart from SOZM – NSZM, there are several other networks working in Macedonia: Civic Platform of Macedonia (around 40 organizations) Macedonia Without Discrimination (9 organizations) and Macedonian Women's Lobby, which is also a member of European Women's Lobby.

"Our experience shows that networking of women's organizations and activities of large coalitions are providing greater legitimacy to their work and enable much stronger pressure on decision makers," concluded Savka Todorovska.

Aleksandra Nestorov from Autonomous Women's Centre Belgrade, Serbia said that there are several women's networks working in Serbia, such as Network Women in Black of Serbia, National ASTRA Network, Women's Network, Poverty, Development and Network Women Against Violence, gathering 31 women's organizations working on the issue of violence against women from 18 cities in Serbia.

Berina Meheljic from CURE Foundation Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina presented initiative for Women's Network of BiH, "which is growing every day with new organizations member joining." As a part of Project "Reviving Women's Network in BiH," CURE Foundation prepared a Directory of Women's Groups in BiH, with information about 99 active women's groups and organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Objective of this Project is to strengthen women and feminist movement in the long-term perspective in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and creation of communication platform that would provide information on groups engaged in protection of women's human rights in BiH.

As a part of her presentation at the Round Table, Natalija Petric from United Women Banja Luka, BiH presented working methods and principles of the European Women's Lobby, the organization based on membership of national networks.

In the discussion that followed, Mirjana Galo from HOMO Pula, Croatia proposed initiative for forming a regional women's network. Women participants agreed about crucial need for good information exchange in order to have functional network, but also to have equal division of responsibilities to avoid "one organization bears everything on its shoulders", as Hatidza Pecenkovic, Executive Director of NGO Women from Una, Bihac, BiH stated.

After plenary panel presentations and discussions, women participants worked in small groups to develop proposals for possible models for regional network with key objective of enabling connection and communication of various women's groups and organizations from the region, taking into account of their specific identities and needs. The first step toward its functioning in the practice will be forming of e-mail list through which the women and organization members will be able to exchange information, appeals, projects, etc. In upcoming period, women and organizations members of the regional network will agree about other details – name of the network, procedure to joining and leaving the network, working principles, etc.

The Round Table included organizing of promotion of Anthology, collection of pieces with title "Why am I for peace" in the bookstore Litera. The editor Sura Dumanic and one of the authors Darija Zilic presented the Anthology.

Summary prepared by
Dragana Dardic

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PROTEST LETTER TO THE INITIATORS OF BUTMIR TALKS ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

27 October 2009

For Initiators of Butmir Talks:

Swedish Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt,
US Deputy Secretary of State, James Steinberg
High Representative to BiH, Valentin Inzko

PROTEST

Being concerned with the progress of Butmir talks so far, and recalling that true democracy cannot exist without equal participation of women, United Women and Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, together with the participants at the Round Table which resulted in the forming of the Regional Women's Network in Banja Luka on 23 October, we request that the international representatives and local leaders include women in the continuation of talks on constitutional changes in BiH.

Women were excluded from all negotiating teams, which have been deciding about the BiH destiny, starting from the time of the Dayton Peace Agreement signing onwards. Butmir talks are no exception to this, while the results of these talks will have an impact on all BiH male and female citizens equally.

Participants at the round table held in Banja Luka who arrived from BiH, Croatia, Serbia Montenegro and Macedonia are surprised with the behavior of Butmir talks' initiators, especially Carl Bildt, Foreign Minister of Sweden, the country that is currently presiding over the EU. The EU countries are obliged to show appreciation towards the gender balance, pursuant to resolutions, declarations, rulebooks and road maps, when adopting any decision on the EU level. Contrary to the expectations of the BiH women, but also of the women from the region, Butmir talks initiators ignored all above mentioned, and proceeded with the practice of ignoring and excluding women, although they were in position to decide about who was to sit at the negotiating table.

This has only encouraged local politicians to pursue with the practice of women discrimination, violation of domestic legal regulations, first of all BiH Law on Gender Equality, and to ignore obligations that were taken over by the signing of the international and regional relevant contracts.

Negotiating table should host women as well who could give a different contribution to the talks and direct them towards the needs and interests of ordinary citizens of this country, who cannot live on the "principle of constitutionality".

Thus, we request that the international representatives consider our protest and prevent that only men decide upon the destiny of BiH male and female citizens!

United Women Banja Luka
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka

RESPONSE ON THE PROTEST LETTER:



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

November 12, 2009

Ms. Dragana Dardic,
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka,
Krfkska 84, 78 000 Banja Luka,
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dear Ms. Dardic:

Thank you for your e-mail of October 27 to Deputy Secretary Steinberg regarding the recent discussions in Sarajevo involving the United States, the European Union and the political leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Deputy Secretary asked that I respond on his behalf.

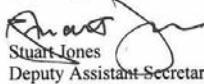
The United States and the EU extended invitations to the leading political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate in the talks. Party leaders then had discretion over which officials from their parties they would include in working level discussions. In the most recent round of talks, a number of women leaders and subject-matter experts actively participated. These representatives continue to work with EU and U.S. colleagues on reforms intended to move Bosnia and Herzegovina toward EU and NATO accession.

The United States strongly supports the advancement of women's rights in your country and globally. We fund local NGO projects to increase civic participation in decision-making processes through various public advocacy campaigns, including projects focused on the political and economic empowerment of women in society. U.S.-funded initiatives also promote respect for the rights of women and other marginalized groups.

We regret that women remain underrepresented in government and politics at both the state and entity levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have noted our continuing concerns in the annual Human Rights Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I would be pleased to meet with you and representatives of your organizations on a future visit to Bosnia to discuss how we can help further to promote women's representation in government and other positions of influence. I would also be happy to discuss the ongoing U.S.-EU reform effort and any other issues of interest to your organization and I encourage you to be in contact with our Embassy in Sarajevo to continue this important dialogue.

Sincerely,


Stuart Jones
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

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WORKSHOPS

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WORKSHOPS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES:

PLANNING GENDER SENSITIVE POLICIES ON MUNICIPAL LEVEL

Prijedor 24 February 2009

Gradiska, 20 March 2009

Novi Grad, 14 April 2009

Kozarska Dubica, 15 May 2009

After the public discussions in targeted local communities, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly and United Women Banja Luka organized the workshops at which women and men participants worked on planning gender sensitive politics on municipal level. Moderators of the workshop were Amela Basic Tomic, a psychologist and Aleksandar Zivanovic, a journalist.

Each workshop started with the presentation of conclusions from workshops held throughout the year 2008 in municipal assemblies, and which were related to gender sensitive municipal policies and gender stereotypes, and to examining the extent to which these measures have been implemented in practice. Women and men participants emphasized the fact of partial implementation of recommendations provided in 2008. Reason for this was that 2008 was year of elections, and local authorities at executive and legislative level faced changes of staff. This resulted in the fact that none of four municipalities has planned public budget resources for 2009 for municipal gender commissions, and financing of the safe houses for women victims of domestic violence. Women and men participants noted that municipal budgets are not gender sensitive, there is no gender balance in the names of streets and squares, male and female sports did not receive equal financial support, and newly formed gender equality commissions did not develop working plans and methodology for addressing gender equality issues at the local level. Some of the women and men participants suggested that the statute should allow participation of nongovernmental organizations in work of the commissions, which would result enhancing working efficiency of the commissions. As a part of the workshops, women and men participants developed priorities for future work and mini plans, with the timetable for implementation of these priorities.

WORKSHOP:

STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES OF DEPUTIES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLIES AND EMPLOYEES OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS

Kozara, 18 September 2009

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka and United Women Banja Luka organized a workshop at Kozara Mountain titled "Strengthening Capacities of Deputies and Representatives of Municipal Assemblies and Employees of Municipal Administrations from Banja Luka, Prijedor, Kozarska Dubica, Gradiška, and Novi Grad." Women and men participants received introduction to the theory and skills of negotiation, public advocacy, and media presentation. They practiced these skills on the examples of negotiations with NGOs on the opening of the safe house and funding of the mobile team for the prevention of domestic violence and protection of victims of domestic violence, as well as through negotiations on possible conflict situations in the local community. After these exercises, they conducted a simulated press conference. There were nineteen women and men participants at this workshop.

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MEDIA PROMOTION

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PRESS CONFERENCES

Banja Luka, 6 March 2009

We organized the first press conference on 8 March, the International Women's Day, with objective to direct public attention on violations of women's labor rights. Jelena Milinovic (Gender Center of RS Government), Aleksandra Radeta Stegic (United Women Banja Luka), and Tanja Slijepac (Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka) talked about problems that women are facing in this area.

Aleksandra Radeta Stegic emphasized historical importance of the International Women's Day. She said that the idea about celebrating the International Women's Day appeared for the first time at the beginning of 20th century, in the period of fast industrialization and economic expansion, which frequently leaded to protests because of bad working conditions. At the beginning of 21st century, women are again facing with violations of their labor rights.

Tanja Slijepac presented results of the project "Through Women's Labor Rights" implemented by Helsinki citizens Assembly Banja Luka during 2008 with support from UNIFEM. During the work on this project, it was identified that women's labor rights are violated, especially pregnant women, which largely stay jobless when an employer finds out for their pregnancy. According to the data from the Trade Union of Republika Srpska in 2006 and 2007, twenty-one (21) pregnant women worker asked for the legal assistance because of unlawful termination of working contract. Additionally, women over 40 years of age are unwanted category and have difficulties to find employment. Based on database of the Free Legal Assistance Service of the Trade Union of Republika Srpska, in period from 2006 to 2007, free legal assistance was provided to 13138 workers. Out of this number, over 500 petitions were related to violation of labor rights. The most frequent violations of labor rights are unpaid wages, unpaid social, and pension insurance, overtime work that violates the Labor Law of RS, unpaid dismissal wages, meals, etc.

Some of the reasons why women do not report violations of labor rights are fear from termination of a working contract, and impossibility to find another job within a short period. During the workshops that were organized for women workers, they were emphasizing issues of bad communication with employers. However, regardless of calls for employers to join the workshops, they did not show up, said Tanja Slijepac. At the end, she emphasized that labor rights are extremely violated in Republika Srpska, and especially labor rights of women, which cannot be justified only with the economic crisis.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Banja Luka, 25 November 2009

With objective of reaching greater interest of women and men journalists in relation to the beginning of the campaign "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina," instead of classical press conference, we organized a meeting with women and men journalists in paid premises. Introductory speaker at the breakfast with journalists was Aleksandra Petric, an activist of United Women Banja Luka.

„In the period from January to October 2009, at SOS Telephone 1264 for Victims of Violence

in Republika Srpska, there were 1572 calls from victims of violence. Majority of calls came from women age 19 to 60. Within the same period, SOS Telephone 1265 for the area of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there were 2120 calls from victims of violence. These data should be observed with a reservation, as large number of cases of violence remains unreported, "emphasized Aleksandra Petric. She announced beginning of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2009.

Aleksandra Petric reminded that 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence represents the international campaign initiated in 1991. Since that period until 2008, more than 2800 organizations from 156 countries worldwide supported the Campaign. The Campaign celebrates and links the dates between 25 November – the International Day of Fighting Against Violence Against Women and 10 December – the International Human Rights Day, in order to symbolically point that women's rights are human rights, and that violence against women represents the most severe violation of human rights.

Some of the key demands of the Campaign in 2009 are related to stronger and more efficient participation of judiciary and police in fighting violence against women, and increasing financial contribution for all programs related to fighting violence against women, said Aleksandra Petric.

She presented the information that in the period from 1 January until 31 May 2009, United Women Banja Luka and Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka provided free legal assistance for 113 women, mostly in relation to divorce, and acquiring custody over minor children. All cases of free legal assistance were related to some form of domestic violence and gender based violence against women.

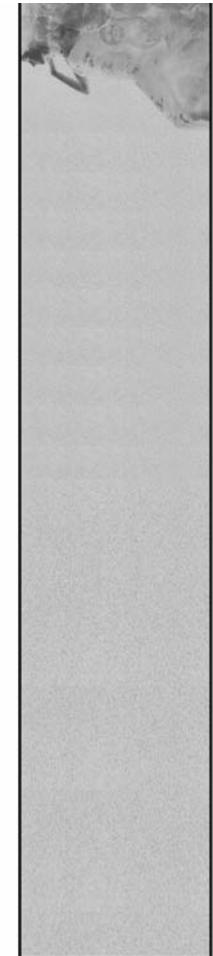
When speaking about the Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Banja Luka, Aleksandra Petric said that since beginning of 2009 until 15 November 2009, 43 women, and 56 children of both sexes were sheltered in the Safe House. Some of the women that find safe shelter in the House were victims of violence over the period of more than 10 years. In discussion that followed, women and men journalists and introductory speaker talked about lack of protection of victims of violence that are exposed to repeated disturbance, harassments, and treats from perpetrators. Journalists were especially interested to know if the draft budget of Government of RS for 2010 planned financial resources for the safe houses in Republika Srpska.

After the meeting with women and men journalists, United Women Banja Luka and Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka organized the street action at the Krajina City Square. Women and men activists of our associations distributed promotional leaflets, calendars with messages of 2009 Campaign 16 Days of Activism, and white ribbons for men to show they support fighting against male violence against women.

Women and men journalists showed great interest for the topic, and some of them joined the street action of distributing promotional materials and calendars on the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign in 2009.

Women and men journalists received promotional leaflets, white ribbons, and calendars with program of activities that will be implemented by nongovernmental organizations throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina during 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence in 2009.

Radio RS (topic on 25 November was fighting violence against women), news stories and reports were also broadcasted at Radio BH, RTRS and ATV, and newspaper articles were published in daily newspapers Glas Srpske, Nezavisne Novine, Fokus, SRNA News Agency and on 24 November, also in daily newspapers Blic.



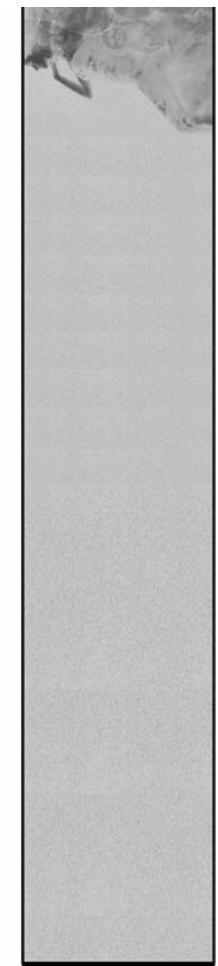
TV PROGRAMS

Through five TV programs, we introduced the wide public with activities we implemented during 2009. These programs were broadcasted at the public broadcaster Radio Television of Republika Srpska. Svetlana Pezer Šukalo a journalist of RTRS edited and facilitated these TV programs.

TV PROGRAMS	Topics of Programs	Period of Implementation	Women and Men Participants
	Women, Poverty and World Economic Crisis	11 May 2009	Svetlana Cenic, Besima Boric, Nada Golubovic
	Influence of the Economic Crisis on Women Victims of Domestic Violence	6 June 2009	Amela Basic, Jelena Milinovic
	Importance of Women's Cooperation on Local and Regional Level	5 November 2009	Nada Golubovic, Lidija Zivanovic
	Stereotypes and the Cause of Violence Against Women and Girls	8 December 2009	Bojan Arula, Nada Golubovic
	Results of Work of Women's Activism in 2009	17 December 2009	Lidija Zivanovic, Nada Golubovic

Through TV programs, we presented to the wide public the conclusions and recommendations adopted at public discussions and regional round table. Women representatives of our two NGOs, as well as women and men experts from various fields participated in the TV programs.

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Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (hCa) Banja Luka is a nongovernmental organization registered on August 16th, 1996 in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since then, it has been actively involved in promotion, strengthening and networking of civil initiatives both locally and regionally in South Eastern Europe, working on reconciliation and empowerment of marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Nowadays hCa Banja Luka is an advocacy and support organization as well as a resource centre directing its actions into three main program areas: strengthening civil society and transformation of public institutions into a citizens' service, advocacy for gender equality, creating conditions for more intensive involvement of youth in public life.

Our mission: hCa Banja Luka is an organization that supports and stimulates autonomy and freedom of all citizens, involving depressed social groups in democratic processes, particularly women and youth.

Our vision: Society of equal opportunities for all.

Priorities of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka in the nearest future:

- Empowerment of marginalized groups, particularly women, youth and minorities for political engagement and improvement of their status in society,
- Influence on public authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina with purpose of improvement of public policies related to these groups,
- Increase of representation of women, youth and minorities in the media and improvement of reporting in qualitative terms,
- Raising of public awareness in Bosnia and Herzegovina on discrimination of marginalized groups and mechanisms for protection of their rights,
- Strengthening cooperation with other organizations and institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and internationally,
- Providing access to resources, educational programs, knowledge and skills related to peace-building, civil society development and human rights to all citizens' in BiH,
- Continuous education and training of personnel of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka and work towards organizational sustainability.

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United Women Banja Luka



The United Women Banja Luka is nongovernmental organization founded on August 16 1996 in Banja Luka. Through the activities and projects of our association, we are advocating for improving social position of woman and her right to life without violence in family and public life. We want to see more women at decision-making positions in official institutions at all levels of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Our vision is: Woman aware of her power, equal, respected, employed, and happy. Our mission is: Strengthening and affirmation of women through advocacy and work on implementation of women's human rights.

Overall Strategic Priorities and Objectives of United Women Banja Luka:

- Fighting against violence against women through offering free legal and psychosocial assistance for women and children victims of violence, work on introducing new official policies and institutional mechanisms of fighting violence against women;
- Strengthening awareness of women and men citizens about violence against women and gender based violence through media advocacy, and strengthening and increasing cooperation with other NGOs and official institutions working on these issues in B&H and the region;
- Strengthening awareness of women and men citizens about trafficking of people in B&H, and public advocacy for more efficient work of official institutions in B&H on prevention of trafficking of people;
- Empowering women to participate in social changes through public advocacy for their active and equal role in creation of public policies, and political decision making at all levels of B&H;
- Gender equality in media B&H – public advocacy for diminishing discrimination and abuse of women in electronic and printed media in B&H, and creating conditions for equal access of women and men on creation of media policies in B&H;
- Public advocacy for strengthening position of women in our society, and diminishing discrimination of women in political, economic, and social sphere through monitoring of the positive laws and public policies, and initiating procedures for changes of discriminatory laws and public policies at all levels in B&H;
- Support for sustainable return in Bosnia and Herzegovina through work with women and men in rural communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Strengthening cooperation with other civil society organizations and official institutions at all levels in B&H;
- Developing internal capacities of the Association through engaging new staff and volunteers and working on development of organizational sustainability through long-term financial, program and management planning.

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Projekat

ŽENA DANAS 13

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Izdavači

Udružene žene Banja Luka
Helsinški parlament građana Banja Luka

Za izdavača

Lidija Živanović

Prevod na engleski jezik

Aleksandra Petrić

Prelom i dizajn

Maja Ilić

Štampa

"Grafid" Banja Luka