

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION  
IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA  
WITHIN THE BEIJING +30 PROCESS**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|                     |                                                                                                       |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AF BiH              | Armed Forces of BiH                                                                                   |
| AGE BiH, MHRR BiH   | Agency for Gender Equality of BiH of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH                 |
| AP                  | Action Plan                                                                                           |
| BD BiH              | Brčko District of BiH                                                                                 |
| BPfA                | Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action                                                           |
| BHAS                | Agency for Statistics of BiH                                                                          |
| BiH                 | Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                                                |
| CEDAW               | Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women                           |
| CoM BiH             | Council of Ministers of BiH                                                                           |
| CSO                 | Civil society organizations                                                                           |
| EIGE                | European Institute for Gender Equality                                                                |
| EU                  | European Union                                                                                        |
| FBiH                | Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                                  |
| FIGAP               | Financial mechanism for the implementation of the Gender Action Plan                                  |
| GAP BiH             | Gender Action Plan of BiH                                                                             |
| GC FBiH             | Gender Center of the Federation of BiH                                                                |
| GC RS               | Gender Center of RS                                                                                   |
| GEI                 | Gender Equality Index                                                                                 |
| GIM                 | Gender institutional mechanisms                                                                       |
| GRB                 | Gender Responsible Budgeting                                                                          |
| GREVIO              | Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence                       |
| IPA                 | Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance of the European Union (PA Instrument)                         |
| Istanbul Convention | Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence |
| LGBTI               | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex                                                      |
| LGE                 | Law on Gender Equality                                                                                |
| LPD                 | Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of BiH                                                           |
| LPDV                | Law on Protection against Domestic Violence                                                           |
| MoD BiH             | Ministry of Defence of BiH                                                                            |
| MoI                 | Ministry of Interior                                                                                  |
| MS BiH              | Ministry of Security of BiH                                                                           |
| NGO                 | Nongovernmental Organizations                                                                         |
| Ombudsmen           | Institute of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH                                                        |
| OSCE                | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe                                                  |
| RS                  | Republika Srpska                                                                                      |
| SDG                 | Sustainable Development Goals                                                                         |
| UN                  | United Nations                                                                                        |
| UNDP                | United Nations Development Program                                                                    |
| UNSCR 1325          | United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security”                           |
| UN Women            | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women                                |
| USAID               | Agency for International Development of the US Government                                             |

## SECTION ONE: HIGHLIGHTS

The Progress Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) in BiH (BiH) within the Beijing +30 Review process provides a detailed overview of the progress made, remaining challenges and key priorities in the coming period. This report follows the methodology presented in the *Guidance Note for Comprehensive National-Level Reviews* in terms of content and reporting process.

The Progress Report was prepared by the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH (AGE BiH, MHRR BiH), the Gender Center of Republika Srpska (GC RS) and the Gender Center of the Federation of BiH (GC FBiH), based on the information collected from the competent BiH, FBiH and RS institutions, with the technical support of the UN Women Country Office in BiH. The Report was validated with BiH civil society organizations (CSO) and competent institutions. With this Report, BiH once again expresses its commitment to advancing the position of women and girls, their empowerment, as well as gender equality in all areas of life and society.

In the institutional context of BiH, the continuity of implementation of activities in the field of gender mainstreaming retains its key importance through recognizable gender institutional mechanisms, primarily AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, GC RS and GC FBiH. The adoption of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gender Action Plan of BiH (GAP BiH) confirmed a strong commitment to systemic action towards achieving gender equality, based on the BPfA principles. The realization of the long-term strategy of gender mainstreaming shows certain indications of success, manifested through a significant increase in allocations for improving the situation of women in the labour market, economy of care, and unpaid work and social rights.

However, despite the progress made, gender equality has not been achieved. Although a female member of the BiH Presidency was elected for the first time and the female Chairperson of the BiH Council of Ministers (CoM BiH) was appointed, the biggest challenge remains to achieve parity or representation of women to the extent of 40%. Violence against women and girls and domestic violence remains a persistent challenge, confirmed by recent incidents of femicide, which further underscores the imperative of further engagement in this sphere. By introducing performance audits in the field of gender equality, the efforts of gender equality institutions in the context of gender mainstreaming are supported. By joining the practice of calculating the Gender Equality Index (GEI) according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) methodology, BiH has recorded a significant increase in the amount of available data and analyses on the state of gender equality.

Still, a continued lack of human, technical and financial resources in gender equality institutions is evident. Human resources are far below the optimum for the effective performance of the tasks set, especially given the continuous growth of obligations in the light of European integration and the expansion of the human rights scope. Compared to the previous reporting period, the budget allocation has not been increased, with the budget of AGE BiH, MHRR BiH amounting to only 0.03% of the total budget of the CoM BiH. Similarly, the budget of the GC FBiH is estimated at approximately 0.02% of the total FBiH budget, while the share of the GC RS budget in the total budget of RS is 0.01%. Therefore, the realization of the gender mainstreaming mandate still depends significantly on donor investments. Gender institutional mechanisms in BiH are still recognizable carriers of activities in the process of gender mainstreaming, and the lack of funds from regular budgets is overcome through synergies with international partners through projects.

## SECTION TWO: PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

### 1. The most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women over the past five years

#### **Achievement: Successful implementation of policies and strategic documents**

The trend of applying and regularly adopting policies and strategic documents for gender equality and women's empowerment continued in the reporting period. By examining the scope and importance of measures and activities implemented in the reporting period, progress can be noted in the implementation and monitoring of the GAP BiH for the period 2018-2022, through the active role of governments and ministries in planning, implementation, reporting and monitoring of impacts. Based on international recommendations, operational activities were undertaken with clear procedures for the implementation of CEDAW, BPfA, the Istanbul Convention, as well as documents in the EU integration process. In cooperation with partners, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, GC FBiH and GC RS (joint name: gender institutional mechanisms – GIM) implemented a number of concluding observations and recommendations of the CEDAW Committee on the Sixth Periodic Report of BiH (CEDAW recommendations) through gender equality policies and primarily through GAP BiH.

The third GAP BiH for the period 2018-2022 was implemented. The focus of the activities was on working with institutions at all levels of government with the aim of introducing the principles of gender equality and adopting gender-responsive policies and budgets, cooperation with civil society organizations and international organizations. The GIMs guarantee professional support to the competent institutions represented in the Coordination Boards for monitoring the GAP BiH and other sectoral strategies and action plans, as well as education on gender equality and prevention of violence, sexual harassment and harassment based on gender. The activities also focused on regional and international exchange of experiences as well as on raising awareness of gender equality. The implementation of the Financial Instrument for the Implementation of GAP BiH II (FIGAP II) for the period 2018-2023 continued with the aim of providing financial support to the institutions of BiH, FBiH and RS, as well as to NGOs, for the improvement of socio-economic conditions for men and women, and girls and boys. Financial support for the implementation of the FIGAP II program was provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in the amount of 15 million SEK (approx. 2.65 million BAM for the period 2018-2023). The FIGAP II program is an integral part of the program, workplan and the budget of GIMs which oversee the overall coordination, implementation and administration of the FIGAP II program at all levels of government in BiH.

The fourth GAP of BiH (2023-2027) has been adopted, and it relies on the strategic goals, priorities and measures of the previous GAP BiH for the period 2018-2022, state and entity development strategies, CEDAW, BPfA, Istanbul Convention, EU Strategy for equality between men and women and other relevant strategic documents of the Council of Europe, EU and UN. GAP BiH identified priority and transversal areas, as well as areas related to strengthening systems, mechanisms and instruments for achieving gender equality, and strengthening cooperation and partnerships with CSOs. Sectoral policies related to gender and security, prevention and ending of gender-based violence, work and employment, support for the economic empowerment of women in rural areas, public and political life, as well as support for multiply disadvantaged groups of women have been implemented. The gender perspective is included in laws and sectoral strategies, and modules for training on gender equality and gender discrimination in the civil service, police, judiciary, armed forces have been

prepared. In 2022, BiH calculated a partial Gender Equality Index (GEI) for the first time according to the EIGE methodology.

BiH has an active approach to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" (UNSCR 1325) through the continuous adoption and implementation of action plans for BiH and regular reporting to UN bodies. The BiH CoM adopted the third Action Plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in BiH (AP 1325) for the period 2018-2022.

BiH is one of the countries that has continuity of work on the prevention of violence, improvement of the system of action and protection, and a strategic and comprehensive approach in this area. This is also confirmed by the acceptance of international standards, continuous implementation of the domestic and international framework through the implementation of strategic documents related to violence against women, domestic violence and linking this area with other development processes.

In 2022, BiH adopted the first Action Plan for the Advancement of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of LGBTI Persons in BiH (LGBTI AP), covering the period until 2025. The AP envisages measures and identifies practitioners for the implementation of three strategic goals: equal opportunities and prohibition of discrimination, equal rights in all areas of life and a society of respect for diversity.

#### **Achievement: Improved legal and strategic framework through gender mainstreaming**

A number of laws, by-laws and strategic documents were adopted in the reporting period, which mainstreamed gender. The gender perspective has been mainstreamed into systemic laws: labour legislation, criminal legislation, electoral legislation, health, social protection (including persons with disabilities and civilian victims of war), education, media, as well as in strategic documents adopted in these areas for their implementation. Temporary special measures are adopted and implemented at all levels of government, aimed at supporting the economic empowerment of women through entrepreneurship and rural development, as well as measures for multiply disadvantaged groups of women. The legal and strategic framework for the prevention and suppression of violence against women, including domestic violence, is aligned with international standards, particularly the Istanbul Convention.

Confirmation of the positive effect of the work of the GIMs and the fulfilment of the obligations from the mandate is the fact that, in the period 2019-2022, the GIMs gave an opinion on more than 370 laws, by-laws, strategic and other regulations regarding compliance with the Law on Gender Equality in BiH, of which more than 88 regulations incorporated standards and principles related to the prohibition of gender-based discrimination, the obligation to maintain gender-disaggregated statistical data, the use of gender-sensitive language, equal participation in management, decision-making and representation bodies.

A direct contribution was made to the implementation of gender equality policies at the level of BiH, FBiH and RS which were fully managed, coordinated and reported by the GIMs:

- GAP BiH 2018-2022 and annual operational plans at the level of BiH, RS and the FBiH institutions;
- Action plans for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of CEDAW recommendations;

- Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” in BiH 2018-2022 and plans of competent institutions; subsequent Action Plan for 2023-2027 developed and pending adoption;
- Action Plan for the Advancement of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of LGBTI Persons in BiH 2022-2024;
- Action plan for improving the position of women in rural areas in RS 2022-2024;
- Action Plan for the Improvement of Women’s Entrepreneurship in FBiH 2018-2020;
- Strategy for the Development of Women’s Entrepreneurship of RS 2019-2023 and the accompanying Action Plan;
- Action plan for the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in RS 2019-2020; Action Plan for Implementing the Recommendations from the GREVIO Committee Report for BiH in RSRS 2024-2025;
- Strategy for the Suppression of Domestic Violence in RS 2020-2024;
- Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence 2018-2020 in FBiH; Strategy for the Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence in FBiH 2023-2027;
- Decisions on a zero-tolerance policy towards acts of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment in 63 institutions of BiH and FBiH;
- Gender Equality Plan at Sarajevo International Airport, d.o.o. Sarajevo; Action Plan for Gender Equality of the RS Tourist Organization 2024-2025;
- Action Plan for Gender Equality of the University of Banja Luka and the University of Sarajevo 2022-2026;
- Gender Action Plans in six cantons of FBiH (CS, CBC, BPC, USC, TC, ZDC);
- 40% of local self-government units in FBiH and RS have adopted gender action plans.

The GIMs have invested significant resources to develop, direct, coordinate and establish compatibility of other projects related to gender equality in cooperation with international institutions in BiH through membership in management, advisory and project committees and/or direct participation as an implementing partner. This also applies to the implementation of the IPA projects, as GIMs are actively working on gender mainstreaming in the IPA programming and the complete process of European integration in BiH.

### **Challenge: Economic gender inequalities**

Although labour legislation is highly aligned with domestic and international standards for gender equality, there are still strong gender inequalities in BiH in the field of employment, work and access to all forms of resources. BiH has the lowest level of women’s participation in the labour market in Southeast Europe. According to the GEI BiH data from 2023, in the Participation sub-domain, BiH has 60.9 points, which is 1.9 points lower than the result for BiH from 2022 (62.8). The result of the index for BiH in 2023 in this subdomain is 21.4 points lower than the EU average in 2023 (82.3). Thus, women face the phenomenon of the “glass ceiling” and have difficulty accessing higher decision-making positions. Inequality is particularly pronounced in governance structures. Women are represented in the management structures of public companies in BiH with 17.5% (20% in FBiH, 15% in RS). As for the general managers of public companies in BiH, only 5.55% of them are women. Based on the gender structure of the boards of directors of the ten highest ranked companies on the stock exchange in BiH,

the management structure consisted of 17% women and 83% men, and only one company had a woman as president.

There was a significantly longer wait for women to get their first job, and a frequent inability to find a job at a more mature age due to changes in labour market needs. There is also the problem of gender-based harassment and sexual harassment. Women experience many forms of sexual harassment from colleagues and bosses in the workplace. Gender-based segregation and stereotypes about “women’s and men’s jobs” are present, as well as horizontal (wage differences) and vertical segregation (division of positions between men and women). For women in rural areas, the problem remains a large imbalance in the ownership over immovable property.

### **Challenge: Institutional response to violence against women**

Despite all the activities of the competent institutions, violence against women remains one of the key challenges. BiH ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2013 and has not retained any reservations following the deposit of the instrument of ratification of the Convention and has taken a number of measures confirming the political will to move towards full implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

In its Report on legislative and other measures to implement the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) pointed out that the strategies adopted to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence are largely related to the gender nature of violence against women, placing it within the framework of human rights violations and forms of discrimination, and emphasizing the importance of ensuring essential gender equality. What GREVIO highlighted as highly relevant are the steps taken by the authorities to establish mechanisms and protocols for multi-agency cooperation at entity, cantonal and municipal levels in the domain of domestic violence to ensure productive cooperation between relevant actors. Efforts in terms of positive developments in the legal framework are also welcomed, and new criminal acts, including female genital mutilation, forced sterilization, persecution, sexual harassment and forced marriage, are defined at the entity level in order to align more closely with the Istanbul Convention. Special support services for victims in domestic violence proceedings have been introduced, through a “trusted person” who can assist the victim at all meetings and hearings in public institutions, including police and courts.

However, research shows that almost half of women in BiH (48%) have experienced some form of violence, including violence by an intimate partner, non-partner, stalking or sexual harassment, since the age of fifteen. Nearly four in ten women (38%) said they have experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence since the age of fifteen from a partner or non-partner. Furthermore, 90% of citizens express a high degree of awareness of the problem of domestic violence. However, 45% of citizens still view domestic violence as a private problem. This shows that our society is becoming aware of certain problems in the transition process, but the patriarchal social context still has a significant impact and solving these problems is considered a private matter, which is also contributed by the fact that 80% of respondents consider violence against a family member justified in certain situations.

### **Barrier: Gender-specific upbringing patterns and traditional values**

Gender stereotypes are still present in education and contribute to strengthening the stereotyping of gender roles in all parts of society, and also encourage the continuation of gender inequality. There is still greater illiteracy among women, and a common problem is the fact that young women are



abandoning education for the sake of marriage and family. The findings of a survey conducted by the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH on a sample of 500 employed women living in a marriage or partner relationship showed that in 93.8% of relationships, all or most of the routine household chores are performed exclusively by women, and in most relationships (80.8%) it is the woman who does all or most of the chores related to child care. Compared to the EU, where women spend an average of 3.5 hours a day in unpaid household activities, women in BiH spend 7 hours, which is the highest compared to the countries in the region (Serbia and Croatia). The survey also showed that 31.8% of female respondents were asked questions about family plans, the number and age of children, etc., at least once in their lives, i.e., questions related to the grounds on which discrimination is prohibited under the labour laws in BiH, the Law on Gender Equality in BiH, etc.

### **Barrier: Participation of women in decision-making positions in public and political life**

In the reporting period, gender institutional mechanisms and NGOs carried out numerous activities aimed at developing the capacity of women to participate in public and political life. Activities included workshops, focused on the preparation of female candidates, and analyses, research, conferences, seminars and roundtables, as well as promotional campaigns on the importance of gender equality in political life. These activities are particularly intensified in pre-election periods for general and local elections.

Nevertheless, the election results of women in local elections held in 2020, when it comes to mayoral posts, are worse than in 2016 (2016: 6, 2020: 5 female mayors), and in the percentage of women elected to municipal assemblies/municipal councils, there is a minimum improvement of one percentage point. (2016: 18.34%, 2020: 19.64%). According to the results of the 2022 General Election, there is a small increase in the percentage of women on the candidate lists, which is now 42.1%, which is slightly higher than the legal minimum of 40%. However, the success of women in elections is still far lower than their representation on the lists of candidates. In the 2022 General Elections, there was a decline in the percentage of women elected to the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (2018: 21.4%, 2022: 16.66%). At the entity level, there is a very small increase in the representation of women, with 26.53% of women elected to the House of Representatives of the FBiH Parliament and 18% of women elected to the RS National Assembly. There was a small decrease in elected women in cantonal assemblies (from 31 to 30%, on average). According to GEI BiH 2023, the result in the Power domain is 49.1, which is 2.1 points lower than the first GEI from 2021, and as much as 10 points lower than the EU27 result for 2023 (59.1). Compared to the Western Balkan countries, BiH achieved a value higher than Serbia (46.5) and Montenegro (35.1) and lower than Albania (60.9). In the Political Power sub-domain, BiH achieved a value lower than other countries in the region, and in the Social Power sub-domain, BiH achieved a value higher than Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, but lower than North Macedonia. The value of the index in the domain of Power shows the gender gap, which is measured through the participation of women in the structures of political, economic and social power.

As for the executive power, the policy governing the composition of the CoM BiH, the FBiH Government and the RS Government do not specify a quota or other measure for the underrepresented sex. So far, no government has been formed in such a way where at least 40% of ministers appointed were women, and women remain the less represented gender in all governments in BiH.

## **2. The top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in BiH through laws, policies and/or programmes over the past five years**

### **Eliminating violence against women and girls**

BiH has a continuity of work on the prevention of violence, the improvement of the system of action and protection, and a strategic and comprehensive approach in this area. This is also confirmed by the acceptance of international standards, continuous implementation of the domestic and international framework through the implementation of strategic documents related to violence against women, domestic violence and linking this area with other development processes.

In August 2019, the CoM BiH adopted a decision on the establishment of a Monitoring and Reporting Committee for the Istanbul Convention and Femicide in BiH consisting of representatives of seven institutions at the level of BiH, FBiH, BD BiH and the nongovernmental “Safe Network”, whose work is coordinated by the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH. One of the activities of the committee is development of the first Analysis of Data on Murders of Women in BiH (Femicide) and Femicide Watch in BiH.

The High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC BiH) improved the data collection system and adopted the Decision on amending the case monitoring system in courts and prosecutors’ offices (CMS/TCMS) in such a way as to record the gender of the victim and the perpetrator and their relationship, thus creating the conditions for more adequate monitoring and reporting to the judiciary in BiH on the procedure of cases of violence against women, as required by the Istanbul Convention. Data on gender-based violence, including domestic violence, are collected at the entity level, according to methodologies that are not mutually consistent. Therefore, the CEDAW Committee, in its Concluding Observations and Recommendations on the Sixth Periodic Report of BiH, recommended the establishment of a single data collection system on all forms of gender-based violence, broken down by age, ethnicity, disability, type of violence and perpetrator-victim relationship. In the reporting period, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH continued its efforts towards harmonizing the manner of collection and reporting in BiH.

There are currently eight safe houses operating within NGOs in BiH, with accommodation capacities of 179 beds, of which five safe houses with a total of 126 available beds in FBiH. In response to the increase in gender-based violence and the difficult operation of safe houses during the pandemic, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH invested additional financial efforts and allocated budget funds for the functioning of all eight safe houses in BiH, which was then established as a regular annual budget line of the MHRR BiH in 2021 and 2022. Additional financial support was also provided through grants to safe houses from the USAID-funded project “Strengthening the Capacity of Institutions to Address Gender-Based Violence against Women in BiH”. Through this project, seven sectoral analyses of the compliance of the legal and institutional framework of BiH with the standards of the Istanbul Convention were conducted, social work centers in FBiH were strengthened and three Crisis Centers for Rape Victims were established in Tuzla, Mostar and Sarajevo, including equipping and training for persons who will work in the centers.

In FBiH, the Law on Amendments to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence was adopted in 2021, introducing the concept of a trusted person. Concurrently, activities were underway to prepare a new Draft Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, which was prepared by the Commission for Gender Equality of the House of Representatives of FBiH Parliament. The Draft Law on Protection from Domestic Violence was adopted in the first reading in both houses of the FBiH Parliament during 2021

and 2022. In 2022, based on a proposal from the FBiH Ministry of Justice, the FBiH Government determined the Draft Law on Amendments to the FBiH Criminal Code, which implements the legal standards contained in the Istanbul Convention. The draft law was adopted in the first reading in both houses of the FBiH Parliament during 2022. The FBiH Government adopted the Strategy for the Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence for the period 2024-2027, and a Coordination Team was formed to monitor the implementation of the Recommendations of the Istanbul Convention Committee, which is composed of representatives of line ministries and the GC FBiH.

GC FBiH supported the establishment and development of municipal multisectoral teams and cantonal coordination bodies in order to improve the mechanism for the implementation of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence in the FBiH, as well as the establishment of better and higher quality cooperation, development and implementation of programs of measures, organization of activities in crisis situations. Cantonal governments have adopted four two-year programs of measures for the prevention and protection against domestic violence, in the Bosnian-Podrinje Canton, Sarajevo Canton, Central Bosnia Canton, Canton 10 and Zenica-Doboj Canton. An Evaluation of the impact of the application of protective measures was carried out, which pointed out the risk factors for domestic violence, which was the basis for directing policies, programs and media campaigns. This research also shows that the greatest impact on the reduction of recidivism is the implementation of the following three actions: temporary arrest, restraining order and mandatory psychosocial treatment.

The two entity ministries of health have developed a Resource Package: “Strengthening the response of health and psychosocial service providers to gender-based violence in peaceful and emergency circumstances, including sexual violence in conflict”. So far, 67 trainings have been implemented, which have resulted in the training of 1,675 health professionals on the recognition and treatment of victims of domestic violence. In addition, a manual “Clinical Procedure in Rape Cases” has been prepared, which also contains Standard Operating Procedures for Clinical Procedure in Rape Cases. A training program “Psychosocial treatment of the perpetrators of gender-based domestic violence” was prepared with the aim of strengthening the capacity of the psychosocial treatment provider, according to which four training cycles were implemented through which 28 people were certified, which increases the scope of mental health centers that have the possibility of implementing this protective measure.

The legal framework and system of free legal aid is not regulated at the FBiH level, but through nine cantonal laws dealing with the provision of free legal aid. The type and scope of legal services, as well as the conditions for exercising the right to legal aid without compensation are determined in accordance with the adopted laws on free legal aid and the entities responsible for providing free legal aid (governmental and non-governmental). The FBiH Ministry of Interior has initiated the process of amending the Rulebook on the manner of implementing protective measures for perpetrators of domestic violence who are under the jurisdiction of the police in order to determine the process and a standardized model of risk assessment and management. Trainings were conducted for judges, prosecutors, police officers and social workers on the application of regulations in the field of domestic violence, as well as activities aimed at raising awareness in the Roma community about violence against children and domestic violence, cases of begging, child labour, juvenile marriages and other socially unacceptable phenomena. GC FBiH supported the empowerment of the Coordination Body of the Bosnian-Podrinje Canton for the needs of temporary accommodation of victims of domestic violence. The legal status of safe houses is not fully defined within the legal framework. The FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy annually provides financial resources for the protection and care

of victims of domestic violence in safe houses, through co-financing the costs of accommodation for victims of domestic violence referred to a safe house. The amount of 500,000 BAM is intended for the implementation of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence in the FBiH budget for 2023, through the program of support for the work of safe houses and shelters for the accommodation of victims of domestic violence. The *#Boljevako* (eng. *better this way*) campaign is being implemented in continuity in FBiH, and aims to prevent violence against women and domestic violence, and all materials are adapted to blind and visually impaired people, and video materials include sign language.

The process of harmonization of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence in RS with the Istanbul Convention has been completed, with the main goal of the exclusive application of the RS Criminal Code, which prescribes domestic or family violence as a criminal offense. The harmonization included emergency and protection measures, cooperation of protection subjects in the best interest of the victim, the obligation to assess the risk of recurrence of violence, and the right for the victim of domestic violence to choose a trusted person during the conduct of court and other proceedings. The GC RS has developed an Action Plan for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in RS for the period 2019-2020. During the implementation of the plan, 15 local self-government units were supported in the implementation of standards for the prevention and suppression of violence against women and domestic violence in accordance with the Convention. Protocols on cooperation were signed and adopted, as well as the rules of procedure of local coordination bodies and expert teams, training was conducted for the procedure, and the "Manual: Multisectoral Response to Violence against Women and Domestic Violence" was developed and published. Trainings for judges and prosecutors were implemented as part of the implementation of the Action Plan, in addition to supporting local self-government units, and they were introduced in the regular annual training programs of the CEJP RS (Center for Education of Judges and Prosecutors). In RS, there are regular mandatory training courses of a modular type for police officers on handling cases of violence against women and domestic violence, as well as manuals/textbooks for practice. In addition to these trainings, trainings on the topic of gender-based violence were organized in cooperation with the GC RS and the "RS Ministry of Interior Women's Network – RS WPON". In addition, the campaigns "Life Without Violence" and "White Ribbon Men's NO to Violence Against Women" were conducted, and the GC RS did a series of analyses with recommendations. During the pandemic, the GC RS allocated funds from FIGAP II to NGOs that run safe houses in RS. The RS Government has adopted an Action Plan for the implementation of the GREVIO Committee recommendations in the RS. This plan was developed in collaboration with the GC RS, all relevant institutions, and in consultation with organizations and NGOs that work on protecting women victims of violence.

The regulatory framework in the field of gender-based violence was significantly rounded in the reporting period in the Brčko District BiH (BD BiH) by adopting the Amendments to the Criminal Code of the BD BiH in terms of harmonization with the Istanbul Convention at the beginning of 2024, and in the reporting period, the regulatory framework in the field of gender-based violence was significantly rounded by adopting the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of the BD BiH, the Rulebook on the manner of implementation of emergency and protection measures under the jurisdiction of BD BiH Police and the Protocol on Cooperation and Treatment in Case of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which prescribes the procedure of all authorities providing protection.

In the reporting period, there was an increase in the number of participants and events organized on the occasion of the international campaign “16 days of activism against violence against women and domestic violence”. Over 400 different events across BiH in 2022 is the largest number so far. Events, organized by gender institutional mechanisms, non-governmental organizations and international partners, included conferences, forums, cultural and artistic content, street campaigns, posters, videos and radio clips, online events, media appearances, etc.

The Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH 2020-2023 was implemented in the reporting period, and, among other things, it determined the obligation to harmonize the provisions of criminal legislation with the recommendations of the CoE and the EU. The Regulation on the Establishment of the Coordination Team for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the FBiH was adopted in the reporting period, and its task is to strengthen links and cooperation between competent authorities and NGOs that carry out activities to effectively identify risky situations and potential victims of trafficking in human beings, prosecute perpetrators of criminal offenses related to trafficking in human beings, assist and protect victims and perform preventive action. Special laws dedicated to the confiscation of the proceeds of this crime are also included in the domestic legal framework for combating trafficking in human beings. In FBiH, these are the Law on Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Property by Criminal Offense and the Law on Suppression of Corruption and Organized Crime. This law is significant not only because of the provisions on actual and local jurisdiction for certain criminal offenses from the FBiH Criminal Code, but also because it contains some procedural provisions that may be significant for the prosecution of the criminal offense of organized crime in connection with the criminal offense of trafficking in human beings.

### **Political participation and representation**

The GIMs, CSOs and international organizations carried out numerous activities aimed at developing the capacity of women to participate in public and political life in the reporting period. These activities included workshops, focused on the preparation of female candidates, and analyses, research, conferences, seminars and round tables, recommendations addressed to political entities, as well as promotional campaigns on the importance of gender equality in political life. These activities are particularly intensified in pre-election periods for general and local elections.

Special emphasis was placed on raising awareness of gender equality in decision-making places. After the 2018 General Elections, and in accordance with the Article 20 of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH submitted the Recommendation for Equal Representation of both sexes in the CoM BiH to the political parties, the Collegium of the Parliamentary Assembly (PA) BiH and the Commission for the Preparation of the Elections of the CoM BiH. The Recommendation to take into account the equal representation of the sexes in accordance with the Article 20 of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH when proposing the members of the commissions of both Houses was submitted to the caucuses of the people in the House of Peoples of the PA BiH and caucuses of representatives in the PA BiH. Unfortunately, the recommendation did not contribute to bringing the gender structure of commissions closer to the legal minimum.

Prior to the deadline for submitting electoral lists for participation in the 2020 Local Elections, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH sent an open letter to registered political parties, titled “Nominate and promote women candidates – it benefits everyone” with the aim of increasing the representation of women leaders on candidate lists. On the occasion of the beginning of the election campaign, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH also sent a Public Statement to all political entities and the public on respect for the

principle of gender equality and refraining from stereotypes and sexism in the content of public appearances and materials during the election campaign.

On the eve of the 2022 General Elections, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, in partnership with the OSCE sent to the addresses of all 145 political parties certified for the 2022 General Elections a Statement of Political Parties on Commitment to Achieving Gender Equality by which they were invited to express their commitment to respect and strengthen gender equality in their work, as well as in society as a whole.

In addition to awareness-raising activities, the GIMs participated in a survey on women's political participation, which identified barriers to women's political participation in BiH and paved the way for strengthening women's leadership and encouraging greater and better representation of women in politics. A baseline study on the barriers to women's political participation in BiH was developed in partnership with UN Women and UNDP, as well as a significant number of materials for the development of women's capacities in politics, including the manual "Strategic Approach to the Success of Female Candidates in Election Campaigns". The Methodology for the Assessment of Gender Equality in Political Life, developed by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), has been applied for the first time and the Assessment of Gender Equality in Political Life of BiH has been developed, the first assessment of this kind in Europe. A campaign, "Choose Equally", is conducted every two years during election cycles, along with activities aimed at strengthening the capacities of female candidates and media analysis of their representation and participation.

### **Right to work and rights at work**

BiH's efforts in terms of work and rights at work in the reporting period were focused on improving the legal framework, creating active employment measures, supporting entrepreneurship that targets women in the labour market, and measures to reconcile private and professional life.

As for the legislative activities, the focus is on labour laws and laws related to labour markets such as the Law on Material Support to Families with Children, the Law on Protection against Harassment at Work, the Law on Social Entrepreneurship in RS and the Law on the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises. In October 2019, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH prepared and published a Recommendation to employers and competent authorities regarding gender equality at work and in employment with the aim of drawing attention to employers that placing women workers at a disadvantage based on their gender and gender specificities, such as pregnancy and motherhood, is an expression of direct discrimination based on gender, which is prohibited and punishable by law.

The key strategic documents included goals and activities related to the position of women in the labour market such as the Strategic Plan for Rural Development of BiH, the Development Strategy of the FBiH 2021-2027, the Action Plan for the Improvement of the Position of Women in the Rural Areas in RS 2019-2020 and the subsequent Action Plan in RS for the period 2022-2024.

In accordance with the obligation to introduce the principle of gender equality in economic policies and development strategies, this aspect is recognized in development projects and individual programs get additional points for project proposals dealing with disadvantaged groups and categories discriminated on multiple grounds. The entity employment services provide funds for the implementation of active employment policy measures and programs in their financial plans, which include a significant number of women, especially young women without work experience, as well as those who are more difficult to employ due to their lower level of qualifications.

### **Women's entrepreneurship and women's enterprises**

AGE BiH, MHRR BiH participated with the Faculty of Economics and contributed to the implementation of the workshop "Increasing the participation of women in the labour market". On that occasion, the Center for Women's Entrepreneurship was opened, whose advisory board also included the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, the study "Women's Entrepreneurship – an overview of the situation and recommendations for the future" was presented, and the campaign "Women are the same as men only less valuable" was launched, which drew public attention to the importance of economic empowerment of women with a focus on women victims of violence.

The GC FBiH coordinated and provided expert assistance in the process of implementation of the FBiH Women's Entrepreneurship Development Action Plan 2018-2020. Professional assistance was provided to stakeholders through the development of the Guidelines for the inclusion of the preferential system for women entrepreneurs, for the gender analysis of end users of incentive funds, a list of budget programs that monitor the impact, recommendations for improving the legal framework in the field of small and medium enterprises, cooperation with the Association of Business Women of BiH and the FBiH Chamber of Commerce through the approval of FIGAP II funds for project proposals that support women entrepreneurs, and Guidelines for the inclusion of support measures for women entrepreneurs to address the consequences of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic were developed. In the reporting period, GC FBiH cooperated with the Association of Business Women of BiH and the Chamber of Commerce of FBiH through the approval of FIGAP II funds for four project proposals supporting women entrepreneurs, in the total amount of 114,025 BAM.

The development of women's entrepreneurship is supported by the Law on the Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, the Strategy for the Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises of RS 2016-2020 and the Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship in RS 2019-2023. The Action Plan for the Improvement of the Position of Women in the Rural areas in RS 2019-2020 and the Action Plan for the Improvement of the Position of Women in the Rural areas in RS 2022-2024 have also been adopted. A one-time support of 500 BAM was awarded to 40 women entrepreneurs, who employ only themselves or are engaged in old crafts during the epidemic. The GC RS has signed an Agreement with the RS Chamber of Commerce on the implementation of the program "Strengthening the Competitiveness of Business Entities Led by Women Entrepreneurs in RS". In 2021, the RS Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, organized six general and one advanced training for women entrepreneurs, a conference and a women's entrepreneurship fair in RS. The Fund for Women Entrepreneurs in the amount of 300,000 BAM was proposed for the procurement of equipment and digitalization of business, education, training and promotion. The RS Government has adopted the Regulation on the procedure for allocating funds for development of small and medium-sized enterprises, which includes the promotion of gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination as one of the criteria.

### **Strengthening women's participation in ensuring environmental sustainability**

When observed in terms of access to control over resources, participation in decision-making and the acquisition of knowledge, gender inequality represents a possible cause, but also a consequence of environmental changes. The available information on the interactions between gender equality, social justice, poverty and environmental challenges in BiH does not allow a detailed assessment, as there is insufficient concrete data. Therefore, there is a need for systemic analysis and action. The GAP BiH 2023-2027 introduced a new strategic area "Gender equality in the context of environmental

protection and climate change”, with the aim of improving gender equality and social equality in all segments of environmental management in order to systematically and in coordinated fashion overcome the aforementioned problem.

The development of the BiH Environmental Strategy has been completed in a participatory manner and it is currently in the process of adoption. This Strategy includes seven policies in this area, namely: water management, waste management, biodiversity and nature protection, air quality, climate change and energy, chemical safety and noise, sustainable resource management and environmental management. At the proposal of the FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the FBiH Government adopted the FBiH Environmental Strategy 2022-2032, which also recognizes “Priority 7.4: Ensure a high level of public awareness of the importance of environmental protection and involvement in the decision-making process, in particular the involvement of women, young people and socially vulnerable groups.” The RS Environmental Protection Strategy was adopted in 2022, in which the issues of gender equality, social equality and poverty were also integrated.

### **Gender responsive budgeting**

Continuous progress has been recorded in the area of introducing gender-responsive budgeting into the budget system of BiH and the entities. At the initiative of the GIMs, the BiH Ministry of Finance and Treasury and the ministries of finance of RS and FBiH introduced the gender equality component in the instructions for budget users. The number of trainings for strengthening the capacity for the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting has increased, and the process has resulted in the improvement of Budget Instruction 1 for 2023 and 2024 with detailed instructions for preparation of budgets in accordance with gender indicators. Currently, the transition from line to program-based budgeting is underway at the level of BiH, FBiH and RS institutions as one of the most important reforms in the field of public finance management for BiH. This will guarantee the systematic introduction of gender-responsive budgeting, transparent and more functional budget management in the manner of planning and reporting according to gender indicators. UN Women in BiH provides significant support to this process.

As a result of the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting, the entity ministries of agriculture, water management and forestry and development, entrepreneurship and economy were supported, which contributed to the establishment of sustainable measures for co-financing women entrepreneurs in the rural areas, and thus increased financial allocations for gender mainstreaming. As an example, the FBiH Ministry of Agriculture increased the budget by 15 million BAM to support women owners of family farms, and the participation of women in the structure of beneficiaries of these funds increased from 12% to 38%. The GC FBiH coordinated and provided expert assistance in the process of implementation of the FBiH Women’s Entrepreneurship Development Action Plan 2018-2020, Guidelines for the inclusion of a preferential scoring system for women entrepreneurs in the FBiH Budget were developed, a list of budget programs was established to monitor the impact, and recommendations for improving the legal framework in the field of small and medium-size enterprises were made.

The increase in the number of women holding farms in RS is the result of action plans for improving the position of women in rural areas, which have been implemented since 2010 continuously. In 2023, within the framework of the RS Programme for economic empowerment of women in rural areas, RS46 beneficiaries were entitled to funds in the total amount of 296,817 BAM, which represents an increase compared to the first year of the Programme implementation (2022: a total of 46



beneficiaries of 5,000 BAM each for the realization of a business plan, a total of 230,000 BAM). Also, in the course of 2023, 16 rural women's associations received financial support for their business activities, in the total amount of 99,867 BAM.

### **Women, peace and security**

In August 2018, the CoM BiH adopted the third Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security in BiH (AP 1325 BiH) 2018-2022, and in August 2019, a Coordination Committee was established to supervise the implementation of the Action Plan. In the reporting period, progress was recorded in the systemic approach to introducing the principle of gender equality in the work of the competent defence and security sector institutions, as well as greater interest of women in the military and police. Progress has been made through gender equality trainings included in regular training programs, expansion of the network of appointed gender focal points, improvement and regular updating of the database disaggregated by gender, as well as promotion and greater interest of women in the military and police. Following analysis of the position of women in the defence and security sectors, the application of affirmative measures and defining activities to eliminate the identified shortcomings continued. Measures include recommendations, adjustments of internal propositions, quotas, notes when publishing public and internal advertisements, and when accepting candidates in accordance with performance lists. The fourth Action Plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in BiH 2023-2027 was also prepared and is in the process of adoption.

In the reporting period, international recognition of BiH's achievements in the field of UNSCR 1325 implementation was at its peak at the G7 Foreign Ministers' Summit which established the "G7 Women, Peace and Security Partnership Initiative"; In this Summit, each G7 member country identified one partner country to "intensify positive changes on the ground", and the EU has identified BiH as a partner. AGE BiH, MHRR BiH has developed a Roadmap with European partners that defines joint actions in the next two years.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, AP 1325 BiH served as a platform, i.e. legal basis, for joint intervention in this emergency situation, especially when it comes to re-allocating existing or finding additional financial resources to help disadvantaged groups of women. As part of the FIGAP II program, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH implemented a grant program in the amount of 80,000 BAM for the field of "Gender and Security" through the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in BiH.

The Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons in BiH (2021-2024) has been adopted. The FBiH Police Administration has adopted the Human Resources Management Strategy 2019-2024, which includes a measure of conducting a media campaign with a special focus on attracting female candidates.

### **3. Specific actions taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls over the past five years**

#### **Women and girls living in remote and rural areas**

The Strategic Plan for Rural Development of BiH, which provides the basis for the implementation of the rural development policy of BiH and establishes programs, measures and other activities to achieve these goals, was adopted in 2018. In November 2022, the CoM BiH adopted the Decision on the adoption of the Plan on Guidelines for Labour Market Policies and Active Employment Measures

in BiH for 2022, which defined the implementation of the Program for Co-financing (Self) Employment in the Field of Agriculture among the measures of active employment policies. This program is implemented in partnership with the FBiH Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, and with the support of MHRR BiH. The implementation of the co-financing program for (self-) employment of Roma is planned. In the FBiH, the Rural Development Program (2016-2020) provides for affirmative measures for women in the rural areas, which includes special methods for ranking women applying to projects. In RS, the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas of RS (2016-2020) encompasses the right of women to property ownership, access to economic resources and the involvement of women in rural development decision-making processes. In the Action Plan for Improving the Position of Women in the Rural areas in RS for the period 2022-2024, monitoring programs, measures and indicators were developed, and responsible parties were defined in accordance with institutional responsibilities. GIMs mark International Rural Women's Day every year. The GC RS conducts the campaign "EQUAL for women in the rural areas" every year, and activities are carried out to better inform women about opportunities for rural development through training programs, workshops, fairs, etc.

Proceeding from the evident fact that the role of women in agriculture and rural development is not adequately recognized, and in order to eliminate the discrimination that has been experienced so far, in the new Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of the FBiH 2021-2027, a special measure was introduced, i.e. a new approach when creating measures of financial support. According to the data from the Register of Agricultural Holdings and the Register of Clients, the gender structure of farmers in family farms can also be viewed by age. The total number of female farmers under the age of 25 was only 149 (0.18%), while the number of male farmers in this age group was 420 (0.52%). The total number of female farmers under the age of 40 was 2,117 (2.63%), while the number of male farmers in this age group was 6,557 (8.16%). The largest number of family/private farm holders were farmers over 40 years old (71,136), of whom 13,605 (16.92%) were women, and 57,531 (71.57%) were men. The total number of registered farmers and registered farmer owners is 80,379 (19.75% women and 80.25% men). The gender analysis of subjects registered in the FBiH Register of Agricultural Holdings in the period from 2020-2022 indicates a propitious continuous growth of both sexes.

### **Women and girls with disabilities**

The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH initiated and organized a joint thematic session of four relevant parliamentary committees of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH on the topic of implementation of one of the priority recommendations of the CEDAW Committee regarding the introduction of the definition of gender discrimination in the BiH Constitution and proposed constitutional amendments that focus on women's human rights, as well as the rights of national minorities and persons with disabilities to the parliamentarians.

As part of the implementation of the AP for the implementation of the Strategy for the Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence (2018-2020) and the activities of the Strategy for the Improvement of the Rights and Position of Persons with Disabilities in FBiH (2016-2021), promotional leaflets were distributed with information on types of domestic violence, reporting methods and those working in protection, which were adapted to blind and visually impaired persons (e.g. the SOS phone number 1265 was printed in Braille). Accessible formats were used for persons with auditory impairments (gesture language interpreter) as part of the implementation of the digital campaign "Better this way" (bcs. *Bolje vako*).

In the reporting period, the GC FBiH established cooperation with the Association of the Blind of the Sarajevo Canton, the Information Center for Persons with Disabilities "Lotos" from Tuzla and the organization "My right" through the project "Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Persons with Disabilities". The GC RS supported projects of six NGOs from RS (Banja Luka, Gradiška, Istočno Sarajevo, Skelani) through FIGAP II, for the economic empowerment of women, through various forms of support and mentoring and for different target groups, including disadvantaged women. The Strategy for Improving the Social Position of Persons with Disabilities in RS 2017-2026 is being implemented in RS, which is aligned with the standards for gender equality.

### **People with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, or sex characteristics**

In July 2022, the CoM BiH adopted the Action Plan for the Advancement of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the LGBTI Persons in BiH, which has a validity period until the end of 2025 (LGBTI AP). The LGBTI AP is the result of the working group composed of representatives of relevant institutions from the level of BiH and entities, NGO sector and academia, coordinated by the AGE BiH MHRR BiH. The LGBTI AP envisages measures and identifies practitioners for the implementation of the following three strategic goals: equal opportunities and prohibition of discrimination, equal rights in all areas of life and a society of respect for diversity. Since April 2019, when the initiative for organizing the First Pride Parade in BiH was announced, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH has implemented several media appearances in which it provided support in a way of informing the BiH public about the LGBTI citizens' right to gather.

The GC FBiH coordinates the reporting process of the LGBTI AP for the territory of FBiH. In cooperation with the Center for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors of the FBiH, specialized trainings are continuously implemented to improve the response of the judiciary, which are aimed at strengthening the judges and prosecutors who work on these cases. Six workshops were held on the topic of discrimination and protection of the rights of LGBTI persons, gender-based violence, domestic violence and gender equality for a total of 216 judges and prosecutors in FBiH. One of the most important results is the appointment of focal points, prosecutors who are at the disposal of LGBTI persons who are victims of hate crimes based on sexual orientation/gender identity in the Sarajevo Canton Prosecutor's Office. The GC FBiH participated in the work of the interest working group of the FBiH Government for the analysis of regulations on the exercise of rights in connection with the realization of life unions of LGBTI persons in accordance with the ECHR.

The Women's Network of the RS Ministry of Interior WPON, in cooperation with the EU and the Council of Europe, is working on strengthening the capacity of police officers from RS, and through a series of trainings they learned about how to act in cases of hate crimes and hate speech directed towards the LGBTI people. The sensitization of police officers regarding the manner of treating LGBTI persons was worked on through these trainings, in accordance with the normative frameworks and legal procedures for the actions of police officers of the RS Ministry of Interior. Educations were conducted on the treatment of the LGBTI persons and male and female prisoners in correctional institutions with a special focus on transgender persons.

### **Migrant women and girls**

The vulnerability of women and children is particularly pronounced during migration. Women on the move are at greater risk of being subjected to violence due to social exclusion or discrimination in their daily lives. In December 2022, the CoM BiH adopted the Strategy in the field of migration and

asylum and the Action Plan (2021-2025). The Strategy recognizes the needs and interests of vulnerable categories, especially women and minors, as well as persons without parental care.

In November 2021, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, in cooperation with the BiH Women's Initiative, organized a meeting with international organizations working with migrant women. In the exchange of information and mapping of problems, the issue of prevention of gender-based violence against women-migrants is particularly highlighted as a problem. It was noted that the biggest problem is the violence that takes place outside the reception centers for migrants and the emphasized issue of prevention in the way of finding solutions for the accommodation of migrant women who are victims of violence. Consequently, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH participated in the development of the Protocol of the MHRR and the Ministry of Security in order to enable the accommodation of women on the move, who are victims of violence at the Salakovac Reception Center.

In the reporting period, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH supported projects for the economic empowerment of women using the FIGAP II funds, including the project "Facilitate access to information and justice for migrant women in BiH" implemented by the Zenica Center for Women's Rights, which developed a short guide on the basic rights of migrants and an overview of competent institutions and organizations that provide support and assistance to competent authorities in the care of migrants. The guide has been translated into Urdu, Pashtu, Arabic and Persian, printed in the form of two-page leaflets and distributed in migrant centers.

#### **4. Impact of the confluence of different crises on the implementation of the BPfA in BiH, and measures taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls over the past five years**

##### **COVID 19 and other pandemics**

When it comes to current security threats and challenges, activities and analyses have been initiated that indicate the different position, needs and interests of women and men in conditions of natural disasters, migration, terrorism, extremism and radicalism, as well as in crisis and emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has a specific impact on the physical, health and economic security of women.

GIMs responded promptly to the problem of increased domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. After the outbreak of the pandemic, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, GC FBiH and GC RS – functioning in difficult conditions themselves – invested additional efforts to provide emergency assistance to victims of violence, and to make the measures of the competent authorities to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic more gender-sensitive. Activities included public announcements, recommendations to executive authorities and crisis headquarters, special analyses and initiatives, as well as redirecting grants and existing project activities towards direct assistance to safe houses.

In response to the increase in gender-based violence and the difficult operation of safe houses during the pandemic, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH implemented a grant in August 2020 in the amount of 160,000 BAM to non-governmental organizations that operate safe houses, and in November 2020 allocated 100,000 BAM of budget funds for the costs of "stand-by operation" of all eight safe houses in BiH, which was then established as a regular annual budget line of the MHRR BiH in 2021 and 2022. In the reporting period, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH supported eight projects for the economic empowerment of women in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic using FIGAP II funds, in the total amount of 110,000

BAM, including support for the economic empowerment of Roma women and legal assistance to migrant women.

To further understand the state of sexual and reproductive health services for women, a research in FBiH was conducted in the context of improving these services in public health crisis situations and COVID-19 pandemic. The GC FBiH has developed the Information on Gender Equality during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and during the recovery from it in order to comply with gender equality standards. This Information was proposed to ensure consistent harmonization of adopted FBiH measures, which should be harmonized with the BiH and FBiH regulations so they also contain a gender impact assessment, because it is indisputable that crises affect women and men differently.

## 5. Priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in BiH through laws, policies and/or programs over the next five years

### **Eliminating violence against women and girls**

The priority in the area of violence against women and girls is the implementation of the recommendations from the GREVIO report for BiH. A total of 66 recommendations have been defined, 19 of which must be implemented without delay and an additional 23 treated as a priority. Based on the conclusions of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly and the GREVIO report, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH developed the format of the Plan of Measures for the Implementation of GREVIO Recommendations and submitted it to all relevant institutions at all levels of government to collect information on the planned measures and activities of these institutions, their monitoring and reporting to the competent domestic and international institutions. This includes the Action Plan for the implementation of the Recommendations from the Report of the GREVIO Committee for BiH in RSRS for the period 2024-2025, adopted by the RS Government.

The GAP BiH 2023-2027, with the Operational Plan of the BiH Institutions for the Implementation of the GAP BiH, envisages the implementation of a number of measures aimed at preventing and combating gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, as well as all forms of trafficking in human beings, through the establishment of an effective system of protection and prevention.

### **Political participation and representation**

Women in BiH continue to be less represented in political parties, governments and parliaments. This is especially the case with decision-making venues because women participate in elections and make up a significant share of political party membership. Affirmative action measures have been adopted in the BiH Election Law, but also by a number of political parties, and contributed to an increase in the number of women, but did not result in equal participation. The main cause for this is the influence of gender prejudices and stereotypes in the electorate, but also in political parties and decision-making places. The focus of action in the coming period will be on further elaboration of the election legislation, support for women in political parties to advance their political skills, promote the influence of women in decision-making places, and try to influence the attitudes of the electorate, including through conducting gender audits of political parties and developing action plans for gender equality of political parties.

### **Right to work and rights at work**

The focus will be on the measures identified in the GAP BiH 2023-2027 that should ensure the elimination of gender-based discrimination at work, employment and the labour market and ensure equal opportunities for women and men in accessing economic resources, including poverty reduction through new macroeconomic and development strategies.

Although there are individual measures for the employment and empowerment of women throughout BiH, the effects of active measures have yet to be quantified, and the introduction of economic policies could contribute to addressing these issues in a consistent manner, e.g. in order to increase the number of women who own property and land. For this reason, the priority will continue to be the development of active employment measures, supporting women's entrepreneurship and the development of measures to reconcile private and professional life.

### **Women's entrepreneurship and women's enterprises**

Equal opportunities in the labour market and in economic life, economic independence and the ability to make decisions within economic structures are vital to achieving gender equality. In BiH, there is a very strong connection between the social role of women, their education, occupation and position in the labour market.

The GAP BiH 2023-2027 recognizes the need to implement measures that provide equal opportunities for the development of entrepreneurship for both men and women, such as conducting gender analysis and processing of collected gender disaggregated data in the field of employment and entrepreneurship, adopting and implementing action plans, supporting research and programs to increase women's participation in the labour force and reduce unemployment, developing women's entrepreneurship, as well as representation in agricultural production and the informal sector, and economic and social empowerment of women. One of the measures is the organization of training programs for women, aiming to capacitate women to seek, choose and obtain adequate employment, including retraining and self-employment, starting and developing entrepreneurship, as well as monitoring progress and reporting on the representation of women and men in the field of work, employment and access to economic resources, as well as in the field of women's entrepreneurship. It also encourages financial allocations for specifically targeted interventions to improve social and gender equality, for the economic empowerment of disadvantaged social groups, especially women, in the field of green entrepreneurship, reuse of recycled waste, etc.

### **Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation**

Gender stereotypes and the division into gender roles affect social models that often hold a woman responsible for family and private life (for unpaid work), and a man for the public sphere and work life (for paid work). This results in an unequal division of domestic and family responsibilities, which is one of the main reasons for discrimination against women in the labour market, limiting their political and social participation. It is therefore necessary to encourage measures to reconcile private and professional life, such as, among other things, the development of business practices that respect family life and are equally accessible to women and men.

### **Gender responsive budgeting**

Priorities will include development and implementation of programs of measures and activities to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual harassment in the field of work, employment and access to economic resources, including strengthening institutional capacities for

the application of international and domestic standards in this field, introducing GRB and establishing appropriate institutional mechanisms that will coordinate the implementation of these measures. Success of GRB implementation is closely related to successful implementation of public finance management (PFM) reforms, as slow and unsteady pace of reforms decreases the number of GRB entry points. Integrating GRB into budgetary system and next stage of the PFM reform will be critical in the upcoming period.

### **Women, peace and security**

The implementation of the Women, peace and security agenda remains a permanent commitment of BiH. In this regard, the adoption of a new AP 1325 is planned, as well as the implementation of the activities under the project “Women lead the way towards peace and security in BiH”, which is funded by the UN Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund, with support of UN Women, IOM and UNFPA. The main goal to be achieved by the envisaged measures is to improve the security of citizens, including multiply marginalized groups in BiH, through equal participation of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and in building and preservation of sustainable peace.

## SECTION THREE: PROGRESS ACROSS THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

### Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

#### **Critical areas of concern:**

- A. Women and poverty
- F. Women and the economy
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

### **6. Actions taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship) over the past five years**

#### **Strengthened / enforced laws and workplace policies and practices that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors, and equal pay legislation**

There are fewer women than men in the labour market in BiH and this has been a situation for many years. According to reports, this rate is among the lowest in the region. The existing legal framework enables women to get employed and work, and it also recognizes and provides protection to employed women during pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood, but does not recognize modern phenomena at work whose definition would achieve more effective protection against gender discrimination.

Measures related to employment support and rehabilitation are still the most popular form of active labour market policy in BiH, followed by activities that support the start-up of new businesses and entrepreneurship. These measures are concentrated around employment incentives such as wage subsidies and contributions, and self-employment. These measures can be particularly beneficial for women, allowing young women to acquire key skills and work experience, providing unconventional work opportunities, and for adult women facilitating their re-entry into the labour market after a break due to childbearing and childcare. Women make up about 47% of all beneficiaries of these funds.

Numerous projects have been launched with the aim of employing and strengthening women's entrepreneurship in BiH. The implementation of the project "EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships" by the BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs and ILO, contributed to entrepreneurial capacity development of over 160 unemployed people, 70% of whom were women, and supported the establishment of 16 small businesses, 43% of which are owned by women. In the reporting period, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH supported projects for the economic empowerment of women in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, from the funds of FIGAP II, in the total amount of 110,000 KM, including support for the economic empowerment of Roma women and legal aid for women migrants.

In the reporting period, the GC FBiH cooperated with the Association of Business Women of BiH and the FBiH Chamber of Commerce through the approval of the FIGAP II funds for four project proposals, in the total amount of 114,025 BAM. As part of the "Empowered Women for Strong Communities" initiative, six local clubs were established to support women entrepreneurs, declarations with municipal heads were signed, agreements with the Association of Business Women of BiH, joint work programs were drawn up, two trainings to strengthen the skills of female presidents of clubs, impact assessment of the Law on Guarantee Funds on the development of women's entrepreneurship was conducted, needs assessment was conducted with recommendations for urgent action of local



governments in support of women's entrepreneurship, primary and secondary school students were educated in six local communities on basic entrepreneurial skills, and two conferences were held. The project "Clubs for Support to Women's Entrepreneurship in the FBiH" established Clubs for Support to Women Entrepreneurs in four additional local communities, continued education of students in four new project municipalities, strengthened capacities of clubs through two workshops, developed a platform for promotion, sale of products and services, and held two thematic conferences. The project "Support program for women entrepreneurs affected by the coronavirus - implementation of online business" resulted in web solutions and strengthened capacities for preparing, organizing and conducting online meetings for nine women entrepreneurs. "B2B platform for online business meetings and networking of women entrepreneurs and women in business" resulted in a developed B2B platform, strengthened skills of 23 women entrepreneurs to prepare, organize and conduct online meetings and tools for online business, as well as 23 business Instagram and Facebook profiles for women entrepreneurs.

With the support of UN Women, the GC RS and RS Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship have started work on measures for the advancement of women's entrepreneurship. During the epidemic, a one-time support of 500 BAM was provided to 40 women entrepreneurs, who are either self-employed or are engaged in old crafts. The RS Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, in cooperation with the GC RS, has improved the Rulebook on the conditions and manner of obtaining financial incentives for the development of agriculture and villages and the Rulebook on Capital Investments. With the support of UN Women, GC RS and the RS Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management implemented the program: "Forming a gender team and initiating innovative gender action for gender-responsive budgeting at the regional level, with an example of the Sarajevo-Romanija region". Trainings in this program were held and a manual for local gender teams was developed. Due to the epidemic, funds were directed to support the production of chicken meat for 200 women from families with multiple members, support for the production of handicrafts and support for the sale of dairy products/milk cream for women's associations in the Sarajevo-Romanija region. The GC RS provided support from UN Women funds for the procurement of equipment to women's cooperatives in RS (Bratunac, Banja Luka, Bijeljina and Trebinje), for the economic empowerment of women in the rural areas through cooperatives.

As a result of the Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas Program of RS, in 2024 out of a total of 42,675 registered agricultural farms in RS, 22% are farms whose owners are women, which is a major improvement over the 4% share of women owners in 2010. The share of women beneficiaries of incentives has increased to 12% or an average of 3,400 farms compared to the total number of beneficiaries in 2022 and this has a steady growth trend. On average, women owners of farms use about 4.5 million BAM of funds from the agricultural budget annually.

The GC RS used FIGAP II to support projects of six NGOs from RS (Banja Luka, Gradiška, Istočno Sarajevo, Skelani), for the economic empowerment of women, through various forms of support and mentoring and for different target groups, including disadvantaged groups, socially vulnerable groups and women with disabilities. In 2020, the GC RS used FIGAP II and signed an Agreement with the RS Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship on the implementation of the program "Strengthening the Competitiveness of Business Entities Led by Women Entrepreneurs in RS". In 2021, the RS Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship organized six general and one advanced training for women entrepreneurs, a conference and a women's entrepreneurship fair in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce.

The Fund for Women Entrepreneurs in the amount of 300,000 BAM was proposed for the procurement of equipment and digitalization of business, education, training and promotion. The RS Government has adopted the Regulation on the procedure for allocating funds for development of small and medium-sized enterprises, which includes the promotion of gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination as one of the criteria. During 2021, the agreement between the GC RS and the RS Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management for the program “Identification and promotion of rural women’s products as an example of program budgeting” was implemented through the FIGAP II. In this effort the trainings were held and the Program of Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas of RS for the period 2021-2025 was developed. The event “Guardians of Tradition and Customs” was organized, the Catalogue of Agricultural Products of Associations of Women and Cooperatives (50 associations and 70 cooperatives) was printed and the exhibition of products of women from the rural areas was formed in the premises of the Ministry. Based on the aforementioned Program, the RS Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management introduced a new special measure of support for the self-employment of women in the rural areas in 2022. The GC RS, cooperated with the *diaspora in* and the RS Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship on the project “Diaspora for the Development of BiH”, and implemented the project “Creative Thinking for Women’s Entrepreneurship”, with the aim of supporting women to start their own business through the application of the innovative method of developing entrepreneurial ideas “Design Thinking”. As part of this, a training was held in Banja Luka for 30 women who want to engage in entrepreneurship. After the training, grants were awarded for the three best ideas, as well as quarterly mentoring support.

Sexual harassment in BiH as a form of discrimination is a criminal offense and it is possible to initiate civil litigation and disciplinary proceedings on this basis. Efforts were made in the reporting period to improve the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace by employers. In October 2019, at the proposal of the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, the CoM BiH adopted the Information on mechanisms for effective prevention and protection against gender-based harassment and sexual harassment at the workplace in the institutions of BiH with a Guide for taking effective preventive measures. By the end of the reporting period, 63 institutions had adopted a decision on a zero-tolerance policy towards acts of sexual and gender-based harassment, and appointed counsellors for the prevention of gender-based harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace. The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, in cooperation with the BiH Civil Service Agency, organized basic and advanced education for appointed advisors, as well as consultative meetings with advisors related to their activities in institutions and developed the Instructions for dealing with cases of sexual harassment, which was submitted to all appointed advisors in the Institutions of BiH.

## **7. Actions taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers in the past five years**

### **Expanded childcare services or made existing services more affordable**

### **Introduced or strengthened maternity/paternity/parental leave or other types of family leave**

In the reporting period, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH conducted a Survey on Maternal Rights and Parental Development in BiH, which identified numerous challenges in policies and practices in the field of maternity benefits, employment rights, rights of socially disadvantaged groups, adoption of children, biomedically assisted fertilization and maternity rights of women entrepreneurs, as well as inconsistencies and different treatment of these issues between the two entities. Based on the

research of the AGE BiH, the MHRR BiH published the Recommendations regarding the protection of human rights of mothers and the development of parenthood in BiH, which, among other things, treats the issue of maternity benefits and employment rights, i.e. the problem that the mentioned rights are not uniform in BiH. In particular, the Recommendations state that the right to maternity benefits is regulated systematically and, in a manner, approximate to international standards only in the territory of RS, while in the territory of the FBiH access to rights is uneven and depends on the place of residence, the amount of salary, status in terms of employment, etc.

In the FBiH, the Law on Material Support to Families with Children has been adopted, and the rights to child allowance and financial assistance to unemployed mothers have been determined, and unique conditions for the exercise of these rights have been determined. Funds for financing the right to child allowance are provided in the FBiH Budget, while funds for financing the right to financial assistance to unemployed mothers are provided in the budgets of the cantons. A number of cantons (Sarajevo, Tuzla and Zenica-Doboj) have determined a higher amount of compensation for all mothers, regardless of whether they are employed or not. A number of regulations of importance for gender equality have also been adopted, such as the Law on Foster Care, the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance, the Law on Social Welfare Institutions and the Law on Parents who are Caregivers. The Regulation on the payment of financial support to mothers for a newborn child in the FBiH was also adopted.

In RS, citizens receive assistance for equipment for newborns, child allowance, prenatal allowance for the third and fourth child, allowance for a parent or guardian, salary compensation during the maternity leave and allowance for meeting the child's developmental needs. The Law on Child Protection prescribes the exercise of the right to maternity allowance for an unemployed mother for 12 months, and for twins and for every third and subsequent child for 18 months, in the amount of 405 BAM per month. The right to pro-natal benefit for the third-born and fourth-born child may be exercised by a mother residing in the RS for each third-born and fourth-born child, regardless of the material status of the family and the place of birth of the child in a one-off amount of 600 BAM for the third-born child and 450 BAM for the fourth-born child. The provisions of the amended Law on Child Protection introduced a pro-natal measure, which stipulates that the costs of benefits during maternity leave are taken over by the RS Government. It is envisaged that every unemployed mother is entitled to maternity benefits, no matter how long she has been unemployed. In addition, the right to financial compensation is introduced to a parent or caregiver, who takes care of children for 24 hours due to illness. The Law on Support to the Unemployed Parent of Four or More Children in RS has also been adopted.

Analyses show that preschool education in BiH still mostly covers children whose parents are employed, which also speaks of the prevalent role of these institutions in childcare during the period when parents work. At the same time, the availability of preschool education institutions is one of the factors affecting the employment status of parents, especially mothers.

Preschool education is intended for children aged six months to primary school. It consists of three levels: nursery (for children aged 6 months to 3 years), kindergarten (for children aged 3 to 6 years) and preparatory preschool program in the year before starting school for children aged 5.5 and 6.5 years. In the school year 2019/2020, BiH had a total of 326 institutions for preschool education, of which 157 were public institutions, and 169 were private, with a total of 30,587 children (ages 0–6). About 22% of children from the age of three to school age completed some kind of preschool

education program, which is a significant increase compared to 2012, when 13.1% of children in BiH were included in early education.

Public kindergartens are managed by municipal or city councils/assemblies of municipalities or cities and priority is given to the enrollment of children whose parents are employed. Although the costs of children's stay in public institutions for preschool education are subsidized, parents bear part of the costs. In addition, they do not exist in all municipalities, the levels of subsidies and the price of kindergartens are different in cantons and in RS, and the available space is below the level of demand. Private nurseries and kindergartens, which charge for stay, are limited to families who can afford such an expense, and lately different levels of government subsidize the stay of children in private institutions as well.

### **Conducted campaigns or awareness raising activities to encourage the participation of men and boys in unpaid care and domestic work**

The GAP BiH envisages the reconciliation of private and professional life as one of the key principles and cross-cutting topics in defining activities for achieving gender equality in all spheres of life in BiH. According to the GAP BiH, gender stereotypes and the division of gender roles reaffirm social models that often hold women responsible for the family and private life (for unpaid work, child care, the elderly and people with disabilities), and men for the public sphere and work life (for paid work). The result is an unequal division of household and family responsibilities, which was also confirmed by the findings of the Research on the impact of the gender division of family and household chores on the professional life of working women in BiH, which was published in 2021 by the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH and which is one of the main reasons for discrimination against women on the labour market, as well as limiting their political and social participation.

The Gender Equality Commission of the FBiH Parliament House of Representatives, in cooperation with the FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, GC FBiH, the Embassy of Sweden in BiH and UN Women, organized a thematic session "Economy of Care and Unpaid Work of Women" in November 2023 with the aim of pointing out what needs to be done systematically, primarily in the segment of social policy and work, so that women would be less burdened with unpaid work, which mainly refers to women's care of the elderly, children and people with disabilities.

## **8. Actions taken to reduce the gender digital divide in the past five years**

### **Taken measures to remove the discriminatory barriers faced by women and girls to access, use and design digital tools**

In BiH, 61.3% of households have access to a computer, and 75.9% of households have access to the Internet. According to the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database for 2022, men in BiH use the Internet slightly more than women, with 79.2% versus 72.7% of women. Nevertheless, this gender difference is relatively limited when looking at people aged 15-24, with 98.6% of women using the internet, compared to 100% of men. There is also a gender gap in computer use, with 69.1% of men using a computer compared to 62.8% of women. According to a 2021 report by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UN Women "Digitally Empowered Generation Equality: Women, Girls and ICT in the Context of COVID-19 in Selected Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership Countries", as far as participation in the ICT sector is concerned, women do not make up a significant part of the workforce.

Statistics show that in this sector there are 71% male and 29% female employees. While there are many reasons for this lack of representation, this can be explained by different career preferences and limited individual support. For this reason, various initiatives have been launched in BiH with the aim of increasing the participation of girls in ICT.

The International Day of Girls, Young Women and Women in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), which aims to promote gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, is also marked in BiH. In RS, as part of the International Day of Girls in ICT, the GC RS cooperates with secondary schools and higher education institutions, which promote and present educational programs in this field for girls and young women as part of the “open days”. Four campaigns were conducted in the reporting period, in cooperation with educational institutions and the business community. By participating in the “Open Doors Days”, the girls were able to learn about the opportunities offered by information technology education programs in secondary schools and colleges. Within the campaigns, girls also visited enterprises and companies operating in this area in the same way. Thanks to the aforementioned, as well as other similar activities in the implementation period 2018-2022, there was an increase of 10% in the share of girls in the total number of graduates in the field of ICT.

IT Girls is a joint initiative of UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women, originally created in 2015 as a volunteer initiative inspired by the UN’s internal innovation challenge involving young female employees. The main objective of this initiative is to close the digital gender gap, promote equal opportunities for girls and boys in education and access to technology, and foster gender equality in the market, work environment and community. A full-day event “Who Moves BiH? IT girls!” was organized in 2023, on the occasion of the International Day of Girls in ICT. GC RS implements the “Girls in ICT Days” campaign.

### **9. Impact of the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment on the implementation of the BPfA in BiH, and implemented macroeconomic policies in support of a more gender-equal economy in the past five years**

At the initiative of the GIMs, and the BiH Ministry of Finance and Treasury, the ministries of finance of RS and FBiH introduced the gender equality component in the instructions for budget users. The budget management information system also includes a gender equality component, to which all budget users must refer when preparing the budget. Work on education and strengthening the capacity to introduce gender-responsive budgeting within the program budgeting of institutions at all levels of government in BiH continued. UN Women provides significant support to this process.

Still, the situation regarding the allocation of budgetary resources of the competent institutions to finance activities on promotion and achievement of gender equality has not changed significantly. The institutions still do not allocate dedicated funds to finance these activities, nor have the conditions for the systematic introduction and full implementation of gender-responsive budgeting been met, among other things, due to the fact that the practice of program budgeting has not yet fully come to life. Nevertheless, the impact of GRB measures is shown in various areas of this report in relation to specific programs, including those of GIMs.

The FBiH Ministry of Finance introduced the practice of publishing the document “Budget for Citizens”, and, with the professional support of the GC FBiH, developed Guidelines for the Inclusion of Gender Equality Principles and GRB in the Process of Planning, Awarding and Monitoring the Impact of Grants.

The GC FBiH has prepared “Brief instructions on how to include the principle of gender equality in the process of application of the Guidelines”. Special measures have also been introduced through selected budget programs.

In RS, activities on the introduction of GRB have been ongoing since 2004, with the development of the first gender-budgetary analyses, trainings and GRB manuals for RS and local executive bodies. The process of introducing the GRB ran parallel to the process of public administration and finance reform. Gender equality standards have been introduced in the instructions of the Ministry of Finance for medium-term and annual budget planning. The Budget Planning and Management Information System (BPMIS) included indicators for men and women as beneficiaries of funds. Trainings were conducted for officials of all ministries working on budgeting. A Guide to Gender Budgeting has been developed.

Gender-budgetary measures are implemented continuously in the agriculture and rural development sectors, through annual regulations on incentives and through a special medium-term program of self-employment of women in agriculture. Following the results of these measures, the GC RS and the RS Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship have started and implemented gender-responsive measures and budget planning to support the development of women’s entrepreneurship in RS. Details of the results of these measures are provided in the report on performance in the area of labour, employment and access to resources, and measures for women in the rural areas.

Gender-responsive planning and budgeting was the subject of a parallel performance audit in 2023, carried out by the Audit Offices of BiH, FBiH and RS.

### **Poverty eradication, social protection and social services**

#### **Critical areas of concern:**

- A. Women and poverty
- B. Education and training of women
- C. Women and health
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

### **10. Actions taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls in the last five years**

#### **Promoted poor women’s access to decent work through active labour market policies and targeted measures**

Due to the frequent violations of the principle of gender equality in the work and recruitment process, in October 2019, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH drafted and published a Recommendation to employers and competent authorities regarding gender equality in work and employment.

Bearing in mind the observed inequalities in access to the rights of mothers and parents in BiH, and based on the results of the Research on the Rights of Mothers and the Development of Parenting in BiH conducted in 2021, conducted by the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH and which identified numerous challenges in policies and practices in the field of maternity benefits, employment rights, rights of socially disadvantaged groups, adoption of children, biomedically assisted fertilization and maternity rights of entrepreneurs, especially in the FBiH, as well as inconsistency and different treatment of these issues between the two entities, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH issued Recommendations regarding the protection of human rights of mothers and parenthood in BiH. In their financial plans, the Entity

Employment Services provide funds for the implementation of active employment policy measures and programs, which include a significant number of women, especially young women without work experience, as well as those who are more difficult to employ due to a lower level of qualifications. These measures also included women victims of violence, as well as female returnees.

The GC FBiH coordinated and provided expert assistance in the process of implementation of the FBiH Women's Entrepreneurship Development Action Plan 2018-2020, and the Guidelines for the inclusion of a preferential scoring system for women entrepreneurs in the FBiH Budget have been developed, as well as the Guidelines for the inclusion of support measures for women entrepreneurs to address the consequences of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Active Employment Policy Measures in the field of economic empowerment of women in RS, Action plans for improving the position of women in the rural areas (2019-2020 and 2022-2024) and the Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship in RS have been adopted.

The FBiH Employment Service is successfully completing the contracting process according to the employment, self-employment and training programs from 2023, which has enabled the employment of about 10,000 people from the unemployment register so far. All programs and measures of the Institute are financed from its own funds provided by the Financial Plan for 2023. The FBiH Employment Service implements a set of measures and programs with the aim of employment and self-employment of persons with unemployment records, with a special focus on difficult-to-employ categories of the unemployed, such as young people, women, long-term unemployed people, elderly people, etc. In addition, within its activities, the implementation of the program of co-financing has begun for the training of unemployed persons in a real business environment in accordance with the needs of the labour market, i.e. employers. Within the implementation of the Program of co-financing joint projects with other organizations and institutions in 2023, the FBiH Employment Service also ensured the implementation of specific projects of co-financing the employment of assistant staff for working with children with disabilities in primary and secondary schools, assistants at public universities in the FBiH and professional staff in social welfare institutions, and children of fallen soldiers.

## **11. Actions to improve access to social protection for women and girls in the past five years**

### **Introduced or strengthened cash transfers for families with children that prioritize women as recipients**

Social benefits in BiH vary between entities and between cantons and municipalities. BiH is at the middle level of social protection spending and has the highest share of financing administrative costs and benefits based on status among the countries of the region. BiH spends just under 19% of its GDP on social protection and approximately 4% of its GDP on social benefits. A large number of these measures focus on women or families with children as beneficiaries of funds. The Law on Material Support to Families with Children has been adopted in the FBiH, and the rights to child allowance and financial assistance to unemployed mothers have been determined, and unique conditions for the exercise of these rights have been determined. Funds for financing the right to child allowance are provided in the Budget of the FBiH, while funds for financing the right to financial assistance to unemployed mothers are provided in the budgets of the cantons.

Beneficiaries of the right to a child allowance are children up to the age of 18, as well as children with severe or very severe disability that arose before the age of eighteen or during regular education, from

the date of submission of the application until the disability exists, and the conditions for obtaining the allowance are such that the total monthly income per member of the joint household does not exceed 40% (forty percent) of the lowest salary in FBiH determined in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Law and that a child is not placed in a foster family or social welfare institution for a period longer than 30 days, and the accommodation costs are partially or completely provided from the budget. The amount of the child allowance is 19% of the lowest salary in FBiH determined in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Labour.

The child allowance is granted to the mother or another person in accordance with the Law on Child Protection of RS for the first, second, third and fourth child in the family, depending on the financial position of the family, the sequence of births and the age of the children. The right to child allowance shall be exercised until the child reaches the age of 15 if he/she is going to school full-time. Regardless of financial position and regardless of the order of birth of the child, the right to child allowance is exercised for children, as follows:

- a child under guardianship, up to 18 years of age;
- a child who is entitled to an allowance for assistance and care of another person under the decision of the competent authority, up to the age of 18, and even after that if he/she is in regular education, but no longer than 26 years of age;
- a child whose parent or adoptive parent is entitled to financial assistance under a decision of the competent authority, up to the age of 18, and even after that if they are in full-time education, but no longer than 26 years of age;
- a child up to three years of age, if the child, according to the findings of the authorized doctor of medicine, needs increased care;
- a child who has been identified by an expert commission, in accordance with the law governing the field of social protection, as a child with impairment or disease related to: vision, hearing, speech and voice communication, physical impairment or chronic disease, intellectual impairment, mental disorder or other impairment or disease leading to difficulties in psychomotor and sensory motor development up to the age of 18.

The amount of the child allowance for 2024 is:

- for the first, second and fourth child 117.18 BAM,
- for the third child 169.26 BAM,
- for children who exercise the right independently of financial position and regardless of the order of birth 208.32 BAM.

Financial conditions (monthly income per family member) according to census for exercising the right to child allowance may not exceed the amounts of:

- for a family with the first and second child 140.00 BAM,
- for a family with three children 147.00 BAM,
- for a family with four children 161.00 BAM.

The catalogue value of the estimated movable property (car, work machine, etc.) must not exceed the amount of 9,100 BAM.



The basis for determining the amount of rights referred above, starting from 2024, shall be determined by a decision of the RS Government as the percentage of the lowest salary in the previous year.

### **Introduced or strengthened social protection for older women**

According to the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance of RS the insured person is entitled to an old-age pension in RS when he/she reaches 65 years of age and at least 15 years of service with paid insurance. An insured person who does not have 65 years of age is entitled to an old-age pension when he reaches 60 years of age and 40 years of pensionable service. An insured woman who has not reached 65 years of age is entitled to an old-age pension when she reaches 58 years of age and 35 years of pensionable service. An insured person who has completed insurance periods with an increased duration shall have the age limit for exercising the right to an old-age pension of 65 years of age reduced by the total increase in periods of service, up to a maximum of 55 years of age. The increase in years of service is the difference between the total determined years of pensionable service with increased ratio and the pensionable service in the effective duration for the same period. Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of the Elderly in RS (2019-2028), contains legal standards for gender equality and for the prevention and suppression of violence against women and domestic violence. The focus of the Strategy is solving problems related to poverty of the elderly, health services, housing and living conditions, living in rural and economically disadvantaged areas.

Law on Pension and Disability Insurance of the FBiH provides for the right to an old-age pension of an insured person when he/she reaches 65 years of age and at least 15 years of insurance service, i.e. at least 20 years of pensionable service or when he/she reaches 40 years of pensionable service regardless of age.

### **The social protection response to the pandemic was significant but did not spur any gender-responsive innovations**

Gender institutional mechanisms responded promptly to the problem of increased domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. After the outbreak of the pandemic, the GIMs invested, in addition to their regular activities, additional efforts to provide urgent financial assistance to victims of violence, associations and cooperatives of women in the rural areas and the most vulnerable groups of women entrepreneurs, in order to make the measures of the competent authorities to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic more gender-sensitive. Activities of GIMs, in this regard, included public statements, recommendations to executive authorities and crisis staffs, special analyses and initiatives, as well as redirecting grants and existing project activities towards direct assistance to safe houses. The coordinating role of AGE BiH, MHRR BiH with international donors and foreign embassies particularly came to the fore during the pandemic and contributed to adequate and timely assistance to victims of gender-based violence being distributed in accordance with needs. Among other things, the GC RS redirected donor funds to associations and cooperatives of women in the rural areas, as well as to individual women in the rural areas from multi-member families, and to women entrepreneurs who employ only themselves and whose activity had to be temporarily suspended due to measures against the epidemic. In response to the pandemic, the GC FBiH developed and offered risk mitigation plans and measures that were submitted to relevant institutions at all levels of government.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MHRR BiH continued to draw the attention of the general public to the specific impact and consequences that the crisis has on the position of women and girls, where, among other things, an analysis was conducted with recommendations on the topic: “COVID-19 pandemic as a challenge to human security from the perspective of gender equality”. In addition to the above, donor funds were allocated to women’s cooperatives in the RS, in order to maintain their production during the epidemic and thereby bridge the crisis period.

The GC FBiH conducted an analysis of the situation of gender equality caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 in the area of labour, employment and entrepreneurship, as well as an analysis of international recommendations, and an “Analysis of the position of women in the area of labour and employment during the situation caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus” with a Proposed Measures was prepared. During the COVID-19 pandemic, AP 1325 BiH served as a platform, i.e. legal basis, for joint intervention in this emergency situation, especially when it comes to re-allocating existing or finding additional financial resources to help vulnerable groups of women.

## **12. Actions taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in BiH in the past five years**

### **Promoted women’s access to health services through expansion of universal health coverage or public health services**

According to current estimates, about 78% of the population of RS and 86% of the population of the FBiH are covered by health insurance. In policy and practice, the health care system complies to the highest degree with gender equality standards, both in terms of non-discrimination and the scope of rights provided, protection of women’s and men’s health, protection of sexual and reproductive health, protection of mental health and children, and disadvantaged groups (persons with disabilities, the elderly, etc.). All laws and by-laws, strategic and planning documents are harmonized with the Law on Gender Equality BiH. Projects and activities in the area of health contain a gender component and are implemented as such. According to the BiH GEI 2023, BiH achieved 92.9 points in the Status subdomain and 98.5 in the Access to Health Care subdomain. Both scores are higher than the average scores in the EU in 2023 (91.7 and 97.3 points for the Status and Access subdomains, respectively). The sub-domain Status measures self-assessment of health, life expectancy and healthy life years, while the sub-domain Access measures the share of the population without unmet needs for medical and dental examination.

The legislative activity in the FBiH includes the Law on the Treatment of Infertility by Biomedically Assisted Fertilization, which regulates the conditions and method of treatment of infertility by biomedically assisted fertilization procedures, and it was amended in 2022 to prescribe that these services are covered in the amount of 100% from the FBiH Budget. In RS, such a legal solution existed before. A research was also conducted on the topic of “Improving sexual and reproductive health services for women in public health crisis situations COVID-19 in the FBiH”.

The GIMs participated in the activities of the world’s leading initiative to accelerate investment and implementation on gender equality “Generation Equality”, and are members of the Action Coalition “Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights”, which was also established in BiH, with the technical support of UNFPA and UN Women. The goal of the Action Coalition is to jointly respond to challenges, obstacles, identify problems and offer potential solutions with concrete commitments to improve gender equality and empower women and girls in BiH.

As part of the grant support in the field of health, the BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs assesses the extent to which the projects promote additional values such as human rights, gender equality, rights of persons with disabilities, rights of minority groups, youth work, etc. when evaluating the relevance of projects to funded. Gender-sensitive language was also included in the decisions on the criteria for the allocation of funds in the field of health.

Health care in FBiH, in accordance with the Law on Health Care, is carried out as primary, specialist-consultative and hospital health care, and as public health care. The Decision on Determining the Basic Package of Health Rights in the FBiH stipulates that children and young people up to the age of 18, school children and students in regular education up to the age of 26, have the same rights as insured persons. The same regulation also provides health care for uninsured women during pregnancy and childbirth, up to six months after childbirth.

The access of minority groups to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services was improved in the reporting period, regardless of marital status and age, including access to contraception, for which purpose a Guide for the Achievement of Health Care and Access to Health Insurance of Roma Women in the FBiH has been developed, with a special focus on the access of Roma women to health care, including rights in the field of sexual and reproductive health, and the impact of child marriage on the health of girls.

The GC RS cooperates closely with the line ministry in the field of health and social care. The most important results in the GAP BiH 2018-2022 period of implementation concern the harmonization of legal and strategic acts in the field of health with legal standards for gender equality. The RS Ministry of Health and Social Protection independently introduced the standards prescribed by the Law on Gender Equality BiH, which shows that they have built professional capacities and commitment to work on gender equality issues in this area, and that consistency in respecting and applying the Law on Gender Equality BiH and international standards for gender equality is in force in BiH. All legal and other acts in the field of health, which are within the competence of the Ministry of Health of RS, have been harmonized with the Law on Health Insurance of BiH, including the area of sexual and reproductive health protection, mental health protection, infertility treatment and regulations governing health insurance.

In order to strengthen the professional capacities for the application of gender equality standards in the area of health in the reporting period, the project “Nursing Strengthening Project in BiH” was implemented, and it was financially supported by the Government of Switzerland. Within the aforementioned project, the GC RS, among other things, implemented a workshop on “Gender and Health” for representatives of RS institutions in the field of health.

#### **Taken action to expand access to health services for marginalized groups of women and girls**

In policy and practice, the health care system is to the highest degree aligned with gender equality standards, both in terms of non-discrimination and the scope of rights provided, protection of women’s and men’s health, protection of sexual and reproductive health, protection of mental health and children, and disadvantaged groups (persons with disabilities, the elderly, etc.). All laws and by-laws, strategic and planning documents are harmonized with the Law on Gender Equality BiH. Projects and activities in the field of health contain a gender component and are implemented as such.

In the reporting period, the access of minority groups to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services was improved, regardless of marital status and age, including access to contraception,

and the Guide for the Achievement of Health Care and Access to Health Insurance of Roma Women in the FBiH was developed for this purpose, with a special focus on the access of Roma women to health care, including rights in the field of sexual and reproductive health, and the impact of child marriage on the health of girls.

Following efforts in the previous reporting period, such as discussions on the protection of the rights of transgender and intersex persons in 2019 and related conclusions and recommendations, BiH joined the Joint Statement on the Rights of Transgender Persons at the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council in October 2021. BiH was the subject of a thematic review on “LGBTI access to health services” carried out as part of the European thematic review of the implementation of the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe 2010(5). As part of the aforementioned review, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH organized a round table in December 2023 at which the preliminary results of the thematic review were presented to the relevant representatives of administrative bodies from the health sector, health institutions from all levels of government in BiH, as well as civil society. At the end of February 2024, the Council of Europe submitted to the MHRR BiH the final report of the thematic review with recommendations. The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH submitted the report to the relevant institutions in the executive power at all levels of government organization, as well as to the relevant parliamentary committees with the legislative power at the level of BiH, entities and the BD BiH. In addition, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH issued a public statement informing the public about the most important findings and recommendations of the aforementioned report, which is publicly available. In addition, in June 2023, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH submitted to the FBiH Ministry of Health a proposal for the draft Rulebook on the manner of collecting medical documentation, and determining the conditions and prerequisites for sex reassignment or about life in another gender identity, with a request to consider it for further procedure within the legal powers of the said ministry. The draft text was prepared by “Sarajevo Open Centre”.

As part of the grant support in the field of health, the Ministry of Civil Affairs BiH, when evaluating the relevance of projects, assesses the extent to which the project promotes additional values such as human rights, gender equality, rights of persons with disabilities, rights of minority groups, youth work, etc. Gender-sensitive language was also included in the decisions on the criteria for the allocation of funds in the field of health.

### **13. Actions taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented, in the past five years,**

According to the GEI Index in the Knowledge domain, BiH scored an index of 58.4 in 2023, which is 0.3 points lower than the 2022 report for this area (58.7), and 5.2 points lower than the EU average (63.6) in 2023. In BiH, the percentage of girls among all students enrolled in higher education institutions (all years) in the academic year 2022/2023 amounted to 60.13%.58, while the percentage of the female population enrolled in full-time studies was 62.1%, and there is almost no gender difference among enrollments in part-time studies. The percentage of women among persons who graduated from universities and other higher education institutions in 2022 was 62.14%. Women make up 63.34% of the population who graduated from university in 2022, and while there is a gender balance in graduating from other higher education institutions, the percentage of women among all students who received a master’s degree in 2022 was 63%, while the percentage of women who received a doctorate in the same year was 46.67%.

The number of pupils in primary and secondary schools is decreasing from year to year in BiH. Nevertheless, according to BHAS data, the representation of boys and girls, i.e. male and female students, is equal. In pre-school education, in the school year 2020/21 there were 13,221 girls and 14,477 boys, 130,519 girls and 137,530 boys in primary education, and 55,336 girls and 55,068 boys in secondary education, and it can be argued that gender parity in pre-school, primary, and secondary education has been achieved. The differences in gender representation are greatest in vocational schools where about 75% students are male. In other types of schools, female students are a majority. Available data show that the percentage of female students in pre-school, primary and secondary education has not changed significantly in the last few years.

As far as early school leaving is concerned, it is approximately equal to 4.6% for women and 4.8% for men. Regarding education employees, women are predominantly more represented, with a share of 80%; there is a gender balance in the case of researchers at higher education institutions, but there is a difference in favor of men in terms of research managers. Data about Internet users aged 16 to 74 show that 77.8% of men and 69.3% of women are Internet users.

The biggest problem is still stereotypical attitudes regarding the role of women in society, and many gender stereotypes have been observed in school textbooks, and therefore it is necessary to act in the education system and through the media. It is necessary to work with communities and with men, and women should be additionally informed through the media, especially social networks. There is still greater illiteracy among women, and a common problem is young women abandoning education for the sake of marriage and family.

In some primary schools, the elective course Healthy Lifestyles was introduced in the reporting period with the aim of influencing the change in awareness, way of thinking, life habits and the introduction of healthy lifestyles of young people. Numerous non-governmental initiatives that work on issues of education on sexual and reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections and HIV prevention have also been registered. However, systematic and continuous education of young people on this topic has not yet come to life, as noted in the latest recommendations of the CEDAW Committee, which makes this area one of the priorities in the coming period.

As part of the FIGAP II program, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH implemented a grant program in the amount of 80,000 BAM in the area of "Gender and Security" through the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in BiH, including the Workshop for over 50 heads of police agencies within the Project "Raising Awareness of Gender Equality in Police Structures in BiH" of the Association "Network of Women Police Officers", Sarajevo, and awareness of the need for women's participation at all levels of decision-making has been improved, in order to increase the level of human security, but also to break down prejudices that work in the police is exclusively male work. Educational and promotional measures are also relevant for the implementation of the UNRSC 1325 and they have been implemented by the Ministry of the Interior of RS and the "Women's Network of the Ministry of the Interior of RS WPON", among which we highlight:

- Preparing a brochure "Woman with a Blue Beret", which was distributed to all police departments;
- Promotion of women professionals in the RS Ministry of Interior on social networks on the occasion of Women's Day;
- A video created and distributed on social networks.

#### **14. Action taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated**

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again emphasized the importance of health in the quality of life of every person. In 2020, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH adopted the Recommendations for integrating gender equality perspective into the process of planning, decision making and implementation of decisions, measures and plans in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The Crisis Staff was recommended to adopt measures in a gender-sensitive manner and to simplify the safe house reception procedures.

GIMs responded promptly to the problem of increased domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. After the outbreak of the pandemic, the GIMs invested additional efforts to provide urgent financial assistance to victims of violence, associations and cooperatives of women in the rural areas and the most vulnerable groups of women entrepreneurs, in order to make the measures of the competent authorities to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic more gender-sensitive.

Among other things, the GC RS redirected donor funds to associations and cooperatives of women in the rural areas, as well as to individual women in the rural areas from multi-member families, and to women entrepreneurs who employ only themselves and whose activity had to be temporarily suspended due to measures against the epidemic. In response to the pandemic, the GC FBiH developed and offered risk mitigation plans and measures that were submitted to relevant institutions at all levels of government.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the MHRR BiH continued to draw the attention of the general public to the specific impact and consequences that the crisis had on the position of women and girls, where, among other things, an analysis was made with recommendations on the topic: "COVID-19 pandemic as a challenge to human security from the perspective of gender equality".

In the reporting period, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH supported projects for the economic empowerment of women in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic from the FIGAP II funds, in the total amount of 110,000 BAM, including support for the economic empowerment of Roma women and legal assistance to migrant women, as follows:

- "Economic empowerment of women from rural areas through the creation of a tourist product on the way to the UNESCO list of intangible heritage" ("Women's Interactive Rural Center" Istočno Sarajevo), where the capacities for presenting the possibilities of traditional ornaments were strengthened in four local communities of Istočno Sarajevo, in techniques suitable for creating a tourist product;
- "The future belongs to us" (Association "Melior" Mostar), which improved the skills of women for writing projects, presentations and product promotions;
- "Economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for achieving gender equality", of the Association of the International Center for the Promotion of Human Rights Trebinje, within which an analysis of positive regulations was made, educational workshops were held and a survey on the economic empowerment of women was conducted, with a sample of 300 female respondents;
- "Psycho-social and economic support to Roma women during the COVID-19 pandemic" of the Association "Better Future" Tuzla, which included capacity building and the allocation of

incentives through which seven Roma women from the area of the city of Tuzla started small businesses;

- “MENTI – Mentoring and education for women - new market innovators” of the Center for Education and Research “Nahla”, which resulted in 16 micro and small women entrepreneurs starting and running a successful business, and their networking led to strong mutual support that was extended even after the completion of the project;
- “Digitalization and unification of women independent entrepreneurs through a common platform to facilitate the marketing of products and services” of the Youth Organization “Kosmopolit” Pale, which included training for 20 women entrepreneurs for the proper use of online platforms for the promotion and marketing of products (website, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, online stores);
- “Creating conditions for work, employment and use of resources”, Association “Attivo” Kupres, launched the “Attivo web shop” which serves as a manufacturer’s service, to help promotion of products and enables direct sales to customers;
- “Facilitate access to information and justice for migrant women in BiH” of the Women’s Rights Center Zenica, within which a short guide to the basic rights of migrants was developed and an overview of the competent institutions and organizations that provide support and assistance to the competent authorities in the care of migrants. The guide is translated into Urdu, Pashtu, Arabic and Persian, printed in the form of two-page leaflets and distributed in migrant centers.

## Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

### Critical areas of concern:

- D. Violence against women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

## **15. Forms of gender-based violence, including their specific contexts or settings, and related prioritized action over the past five years**

### **Intimate partner violence, including sexual violence and marital rape**

BiH was among the first countries in Europe to ratify the 2013 Istanbul Convention. The GIMs implemented the process of preparing a report on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. In October 2021, a field visit of a team of experts to monitor the implementation of the Istanbul Convention (GREVIO) was carried out to relevant institutions at all levels of government in BiH, after which BiH submitted a Draft Report. Based on BiH's comments on the Draft Report, and GREVIO prepared the Final Report, after which the Council of Europe adopted the Recommendations for BiH on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

In BiH, there is a continuity of work on the prevention and ending of domestic violence and violence against women. Significant efforts were made in the reporting period to harmonize the legal framework and develop a network of protection and prevention actors. Institutional mechanisms for gender equality, the non-governmental sector, as well as international partners, such as USAID, SIDA and UN Women, play a significant role in this process.

Gender-based violence in BiH remains a challenge. Based on the data of the Agency for Statistics of BiH, in 2020, 5011 calls to SOS lines related to domestic violence were reported. According to a 2019 survey by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to BiH, almost half of women in BiH (48%) have experienced some form of violence, including violence by an intimate partner, non-partner, stalking or sexual harassment, since they were 15 years old. More precisely, almost four out of ten women (38%) stated that they have experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence since the age of fifteen by a partner or non-partner (FBiH: 36%, RS: 39%). The issue of violence against women, especially sexual violence and sexual harassment, is gaining more visible every day through various media, and with the increasing influence of social networks, public but also anonymous spaces have been created to share experiences of violence (such as FB page "I did not ask for it" (Nisam tražila)).

In August 2019, the CoM of BiH adopted the Decision on the establishment of a Monitoring and Reporting Committee under the Istanbul Convention and Femicide in BiH, whose work is coordinated by the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH. As part of the Committee's activities, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, among other things, conducted the Analysis of the System for the Collection of Data on Femicide Cases in BiH, and in November 2022 organized a study visit of Dubravka Šimonović, Special Rapporteur of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences. The aim of the visit was to assess the work and results of the Committee and other institutions regarding femicide in BiH.

In order to create and implement new advanced modules on gender equality within the training program, a Methodology and module for training police officers to work with victims of domestic



violence and other forms of gender-based violence was developed in RS, which was included in the regular Plan and Program of the RS Police Training Directorate, and thus became sustainable as part of the institutional system.

The capacities of the judiciary were strengthened, in such a way that 11 trainings were conducted for a total of 125 judges and prosecutors in cooperation with the Center for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors of RS and the Center for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors of the FBiH.

Finally, an initiative was launched to establish the first three Crisis Centers for Rape Victims in BiH – at medical institutions in Tuzla, Mostar and Sarajevo. In addition to support in equipping the premises, training was also conducted for staff who will work in the centers.

### **Sexual harassment and violence in public places, educational settings and workplaces**

In terms of specific forms of sexual harassment in the workplace, according to the results of the research, women are exposed to sexual gestures, jokes or sounds much more often than men, so this form of sexual harassment was experienced by 36.4% of women compared to 19.2% of men. The perpetrators of sexual harassment of women are usually men (85.1%), superiors or persons in higher positions (69.6%), while 39.2% of the perpetrators work in positions that are at the same level as the position of their victims. Due to such practices, economic gender inequalities remain unchanged regardless of the change of generations and represent one of the most important areas of gender inequality regardless of the number of implemented employment policies and economic empowerment measures.

Sexual harassment and gender-based harassment in the workplace lead to “a violation of the dignity of the person or group of persons who suffer harassment on the basis of gender or sexual harassment, that is, the creation of an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment” Determining the consequence is a factual issue determined for each process based on a subjective experience. In practice, this means that there is a consequence that the “average” person would consider to have led to a change in working conditions. The Law on Gender Equality in BiH stipulates that the employer must take effective measures to prevent gender-based harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination in work and labour relations. Provisions on the prohibition of sexual harassment and related obligations of employers are incorporated into labour legislation in BiH. In RS, the Law on Protection against Harassment at Work regulates protection against harassment at work and in connection with work, the procedure for exercising the right to protection against harassment at work and in connection with work and other issues of importance for protection against harassment at work and in connection with work. Amendments to the RS Criminal Code in 2023 resulted in an additional harmonization of the criminal offense of sexual harassment with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. Namely, the subordinate relationship of the victim in relation to the perpetrator has been removed from the description of the nature of this criminal act, and now sexual harassment is prohibited regardless of the mutual relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

Sexual harassment in the workplace is an additional problem for achieving a better position of women in the labour market. According to a recent survey, this form of discrimination is not only present but also common. The survey shows that women are more likely to be exposed to sexual harassment in the workplace than men; and thus, 21.2% of men have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment, while this percentage in women is 37.5%. Almost one in five (18%) women have suffered sexual harassment multiple times (compared to 11.2% of men).

Women experience many forms of sexual harassment from colleagues and bosses in the workplace. This is usually manifested through inappropriate invitations to go out on a date, intrusive and offensive comments about someone's appearance or private life, but also through difficult forms, such as comments or jokes with sexual content. Strangers are the main perpetrators when we talk about inappropriate staring or watching, inappropriate attempts at bonding on social networks and the Internet, and offensive emails or SMS messages with explicit sexual content. The most common forms of sexual harassment were intrusive questions about private life and comments or jokes with sexual content, then inappropriate invitations to go out on a date, inappropriate staring or watching and intrusive comments about physical appearance.

At the proposal of the GC FBiH, the FBiH Government adopted a Decision on a zero-tolerance policy towards acts of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment in federal administrative bodies, federal administrative organizations, services and other bodies founded by the FBiH Government.

### **Violence against women and girls facilitated by technology**

In BiH, online violence is not precisely defined, but crimes that can sanction online violence are crimes related to sexual harassment, hate speech and inciting violence against someone or a group. The following amendments to the RS Criminal Code were adopted in 2023: two new criminal offenses were prescribed – Unauthorized publication and display of someone else's file, portrait and video and Abuse of photographs and videos of sexually explicit content – and they are aimed at preventing domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence through information technologies. These RS Criminal Code amendments are in line with the Istanbul Convention. The FBiH Government submitted the Draft Law on Amendments to the FBiH Criminal Code to the FBiH Parliament for adoption; The draft introduces a new article defining a new criminal offense of misuse of footage of sexually explicit content, whereby the FBiH criminal legislation monitors the development of technology and malicious social behaviors. The draft was adopted in the first reading in 2022 in both houses of the FBiH Parliament, and the FBiH Ministry of Justice, with the support of UN Women, is currently conducting activities on the preparation of the Draft Law on Amendments to the FBiH Criminal Code for referral to the second reading.

### **Femicide/Feminicide/gender-related killings of women and girls**

According to the BHAS data on the violent death of women, in the period 2016-2022, 76 women were killed. Analyses show that femicide cases are not isolated incidents that occur suddenly, but represent the ultimate act of repeated violence. In the period from 2017 to 2021, 36 perpetrators of murder of women were prosecuted in BiH, and in 100% of cases convictions were pronounced. Of the 36 cases, two long-term sentences of 30 years were imposed, one prison sentence of 15 years, but there were also prison sentences of one year. The average sentence is nine years and nine months.

## **16. Actions prioritized to address gender-based violence in the past five years**

### **Introduced or strengthened violence against women laws, and their enforcement and implementation**

The Law on Amendments to the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of FBiH introduced the institution of a person of trust. In parallel with that, there were also activities on the preparation of

the new Draft Law on the protection against domestic violence, which was prepared by the Commission for Gender Equality of the FBiH Parliament House of Representatives. The draft law on protection against domestic violence was adopted in the first reading in both houses of the FBiH Parliament during 2021 and 2022, respectively. The FBiH Ministry of Justice is currently finalizing activities on the preparation of the Draft for the second reading, with a focus on the implementation of GREVIO recommendations.

In 2022, the FBiH Ministry of Justice prepared amendments to the FBiH Criminal Code, which were adopted in the draft by both chambers of the FBiH Parliament. The Regulation on the Establishment of the Coordination Team for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the FBiH was adopted.

In RS, the process of harmonization of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence with the Istanbul Convention has been carried out, with the main goal of the exclusive application of the RS Criminal Code, which prescribes domestic or family violence as a criminal offense. The harmonization included urgent and protective measures, cooperation of authorities providing protection in the best interest of the victim, the obligation to assess the risk of recurrence of violence, and the right for the victim of domestic violence to choose a trusted person during the conduct of court and other proceedings.

In RS, the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of RS is in force. The legal framework in RS in the field of prevention and suppression of violence is largely aligned with the Istanbul Convention. In the reporting period, misdemeanor punishment for domestic violence was abolished, i.e. violence is a criminal offense. Work continued on supporting authorities providing protection against violence at the local level, in order to form and strengthen existing multisectoral teams.

In the reporting period, BD BiH started to complete the regulatory framework in the field of combating domestic violence by adopting the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of BD BiH in 2018, as well as the Rulebook on the manner of implementation of emergency and protective measures under the jurisdiction of the Police of Brcko District of BiH and the Protocol on Cooperation and Procedure in Cases of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which prescribes the conduct of all authorities providing protection.

### **Introduced, updated or expanded national action plans on ending violence against women and girls**

The GAP BiH includes gender based violence as one of its priority areas. The GC RS developed an Action Plan for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the RS for the period 2019-2020, while the Action Plan for implementing the recommendations from the GREVIO report for the period 2024-2025 was adopted. During the implementation of the plan, 15 local self-government units were supported in the implementation of standards for the prevention and suppression of violence against women and domestic violence in accordance with the Convention. Protocols on cooperation have been signed and adopted, as well as the rules of procedure of local coordination bodies and expert teams, and training was conducted for the procedure, and the “Manual: Multisectoral Response to Violence against Women and Domestic Violence” was developed and published.

The FBiH Development Strategy (2021-2027) defines the measure to “Promote tolerance, non-violence and gender equality in family and society”, which takes a strategic approach to prevention and treatment in cases of domestic violence. The FBiH Government has adopted the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence 2018-2020 and annual implementation reports. The GC FBiH coordinated the process of drafting the Strategy for

the Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence 2021-2027. The GC FBiH supported the implementation of the Strategy through various projects. The aforementioned project “Strengthening the Capacity of Institutions to Address Gender-Based Violence in BiH”, funded by USAID, supported cantonal coordination bodies and five municipal multisectoral teams with the aim of implementing domestic and international standards in the field of domestic violence.

Entity ministries of health developed a Resource Package: “Strengthening the response of health and psychosocial service providers to gender-based violence in peaceful and emergency circumstances, including sexual violence in conflict”. So far, 67 trainings have been implemented, which have resulted in the training of 1,675 health professionals on the recognition and treatment of victims of domestic violence. In addition, a manual “Clinical Procedure in Rape Cases” has been prepared, which also contains Standard Operating Procedures for Clinical Procedure in Rape Cases.

A training program “Psychosocial treatment of the perpetrators of gender-based domestic violence” has been prepared with the aim of strengthening the capacity of the psychosocial treatment providers, according to which four training cycles were implemented and 28 people were certified, increasing the scope of mental health centers that have the possibility of implementing this protective measure.

#### **Introduced or strengthened measures to increase women’s access to justice**

Efforts to improve the response of the judiciary are aimed at strengthening the judges and prosecutors working on these cases. Based on the proposal of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of BiH, the Entity Centers for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors have included training in their annual education programs with the aim of improving gender equality in the BiH judiciary, and the position of vulnerable groups, including women victims of violence, in contact with the judiciary. One example is the seminar “Members of vulnerable groups as witnesses in proceedings” dedicated to basic communication skills and their application in investigative and judicial proceedings, basic communication techniques in the work of prosecutors and judges, and communication skills in situations of intense feelings and ways of questioning witnesses – members of vulnerable groups (children, persons with reduced intellectual efficiency, persons with reduced physical capabilities, persons from the LGBTI population, victims of violence).

The GC FBiH also supported the activities of the FBiH Ministry of Interior, which, with the support of UN Women, organized meetings with representatives of cantonal ministries working on the prevention of domestic violence crimes, in order to analyze regulations and improve activities on the prevention of domestic violence. Documents with proposals for improving the internal organizations of cantonal ministries of interior have been developed, as well as the Manual for conducting training of police officers for dealing with cases of domestic violence and violence against women, which consists of two modules: (1) Actions of police officers on reports of domestic violence and implementation of protective measures and (2) Prosecution of perpetrators of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women.

The GC FBiH also supported the development of nine cantonal coordination bodies and 64 municipal multisectoral teams, through the project “Strengthening the Capacity of Institutions to Address Gender-Based Violence in BiH”, funded by USAID. Through this, projects were assigned to the 15 mentioned bodies that implemented activities from their programs of measures. Workshops for occupational stress and burnout, multisectoral education, etc. were also supported through the project.

Competent institutions for the education of judges and prosecutors, police officers, health and social workers in the FBiH and RS have developed and implemented or are in the process of developing a program for the training of professionals in order to adequately and properly ensure response and treatment in cases of domestic violence. The FBiH Ministry of Interior has developed and implemented trainings in all cantonal ministries of interior in accordance with the Manual for Conducting Training of Police Officers in Cases of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women. The FBiH Ministry of Health conducts training and certification of psychosocial treatment providers, and the training program for social workers is also under development by the FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. In FBiH, trainings were conducted in all ten cantons for representatives of the judiciary, police and social protection on the topic “Application of regulations in the field of domestic violence” in cooperation with the GC FBiH and the Center for Education of Judges and Prosecutors FBiH.

During the implementation of the plan, 15 local self-government units were supported in the implementation of standards for the prevention and suppression of violence against women and domestic violence in accordance with the Convention. Protocols on cooperation were signed and adopted, as well as the rules of procedure of local coordination bodies and expert teams, training was conducted for the procedure, and the “Manual: Multisectoral Response to Violence against Women and Domestic Violence” was developed and published. As part of the implementation of the Action Plan, in addition to supporting local self-government units, trainings for judges and prosecutors were also implemented, which were introduced in the regular annual training programs of the Center for Education of Judges and Prosecutors RS. In RS, there are regular mandatory training courses of a modular type for police officers on handling cases of violence against women and domestic violence, as well as manuals/textbooks for practice. In addition to these trainings, trainings on the topic of gender-based violence were organized in cooperation with the GC RS and the “Network of Women of the RS Ministry of Interior – RS WPON”. In addition, campaigns “Life without violence” and “White ribbon Male No to violence against women” were conducted.

#### **Introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence**

There are currently eight safe houses operating within NGOs in BiH, with accommodation capacities of 179 beds.

The legal status of safe houses is not fully defined within the legal framework. This has caused certain financial difficulties in the operation of safe houses, which is an issue that must be resolved as a priority. The FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy annually provides financial resources for the protection and care of victims of domestic violence in safe houses, through co-financing the costs of accommodation for victims of domestic violence sent to a safe house. The funds are awarded through the Current Transfer to Non-Profit Organizations – Implementation of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence based on the Public Call for the allocation of funds for associations/foundations that provide temporary accommodation to victims of domestic violence. In the RS, the financing of safe houses is regulated by the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, and it is prescribed that 70% of the costs are allocated from the RS Budget, and the rest from the local level government budget through centers for social work. In order to implement these provisions of the Law, special rules were adopted that relate to the operation of safe houses, their registration and financing: 1. Rulebook on standards for the realization of a safe house 2. Rulebook on the content and method of keeping the register of safe houses 3. Rulebook on the method of allocation of funds safe houses.

In August 2020, the MHRR BiH implemented grant funds in the amount of 160,000 BAM for non-governmental organizations that have safe houses. In November 2020, it allocated 100,000 BAM of budget funds for the costs of "stand-by" of all eight safe houses in BiH, which was established as a regular annual budget line of the MHRR BiH in both 2021 and 2022.

At the proposal of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Government of the FBiH adopted the Decision on the adoption of the Spending Program with the criteria for the allocation of funds of current and capital transfers determined by the FBiH Budget for 2023. In this regard, the amount of 500,000 BAM is intended for the implementation of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, through the program of support for the work of safe houses and shelters for the accommodation of victims of domestic violence.

During the pandemic, the GC RS allocated funds from the FIGAP II to NGOs that run safe houses in RS:

- Association of citizens "Budućnost" Modriča – exchange of experiences and defining steps for the development of a plan for the protection of female beneficiaries and staff in the event of an emergency, in order to mitigate the consequences caused by the pandemic.
- Foundation "Lara" Bijeljina – supervision was organized for the staff of the safe house and psychological support for victims of violence.
- Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka and Association of Citizens "Budućnost" Modriča – support groups for female users of specialized services were organized.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation of impact, including evidence generation and data collection**

Based on the data of the Agency for Statistics of BiH (hereinafter: BHAS), 5011 calls to SOS lines related to domestic violence were reported in 2020. According to a 2019 survey by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission to BiH, almost half of women in BiH (48%) have experienced some form of violence, including violence by an intimate partner, non-partner, stalking or sexual harassment, since they were 15 years old.

The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH conducted an Analysis of the System for Collection of Data on Femicide Cases in BiH, and in November 2022 it organized a study visit of Dubravka Šimonović, the Special Rapporteur of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences. The purpose of the visit was to assess the work and results of the Committee and other institutions related to femicide in BiH.

Gender-sensitive statistics in the FBiH and RS are collected, processed and published in regular annual general and special publications and the biennial bulletin "Women and Men in the FBiH", and "Women and Men in RS" (which is published in Serbian and English), and periodic collection, processing and publication of data for monitoring UN sustainable development indicators has been introduced.

An Evaluation of the impact of the application of protective measures was carried out, and pointed out the risk factors for domestic violence, which was the basis for directing policies, programs and media campaigns. Namely, the causes of violence can be found in learned transgenerationally transferable patterns of behavior related to risk factors such as childhood violence, use of narcotics, gambling addiction, educational status, history of other criminal offenses and misdemeanors, inequality and economic dependence. This research also shows that the greatest impact on the reduction of recidivism is the implementation of the following three actions: temporary deprivation of liberty, restraining order and order to cease harassment and mandatory psychosocial treatment.

Within the framework of the multiannual GCFBiH project supported by UN Women - "Improving access to multisectoral services for victims of gender-based violence at the cantonal and municipal level"- , the GCFBiH has produced the following publications: Proceedings in cases of domestic violence – multisectoral response; Work with persons who have committed domestic violence – Guide for the management of self-help groups; Studies of domestic violence cases with standardization of the quality of work of multisectoral teams; Analysis of the regulation of economic empowerment of women victims of violence in the FBiH; Analysis of the work of the SOS telephone 1265; Analysis of the implementation of the protective measure of compulsory psychosocial treatment and Guidelines for the development of a multidisciplinary approach in cases of domestic violence – Lessons learned.

## **17. Strategies used to prevent gender-based violence in the past five years**

### **Promoting non-violent family relationships and positive parenting practices**

Each year, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH marks "16 days of activism against gender-based violence". In 2021, the Agency presented two videos to the public of BiH, which they created as part of the global campaign "16 Days of Activism".

The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH campaign "Break the cycle of violence" and "Liberate yourself", among other things, consisted of animated web ads ("banners") broadcast on paid advertising space on the most visited web portals (543,197 impressions), Google (3,757,306 views), You-Tube (34,411 views and 202,598 impressions), Instagram and Facebook (3,248,370 impressions). *The campaign "Bolje 'vako" (Better this way) is being implemented in the FBiH with the aim of changing social awareness through changing individual patterns of behavior, strengthening partner relationships and communication with children. Eight videos were realized and promoted within it. The campaign also addresses the risk factors for violence, and indirectly affected about 4,500,000 citizens through digital marketing.* Every year, GC RS implements the campaigns "Stop Violence Against Women" and "White Ribbon – Male No to Violence Against Women", "EQUAL for women in the rural areas", "Girls in ICT", and the campaign "CHOOSE EQUAL", which is carried out every two years in election years. Campaigns against gender-based violence are carried out in cooperation with top officials and decision-makers in RS, and local authorities, NGOs, the media and public figures.

The GC RS posts information on the official website on the portal of the Government of RS and online platforms – Facebook and Instagram. Post views range from 50,000 to 100,000 per post. The campaign "Stop Violence Against Women – Love is not of this color" was recognized at the regional level in 2020. In 2021, this campaign achieved visibility on Facebook of 100,000 views, and in 2022, "Femicide - No More Victims! For the safe life of every woman!" has reached visibility of over 30,000.

## **18. Actions taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence in the past five years**

### **Introduced or strengthened legislation and regulatory provisions**

Criminal legislation prohibits any type of gender-based violence, and legal solutions are continuously monitored and improved. The FBiH Criminal Code prescribes more severe punishment for a qualified form of hate murder, the basis of which may also be the sex of the victim, for which a sentence of imprisonment of at least ten years or a sentence of long-term imprisonment is prescribed, and for the most serious form of domestic violence resulting in the death of a family member who was previously

abused by the perpetrator, the imprisonment of at least ten years or a sentence of long-term imprisonment is prescribed.

The Article 359 of the Criminal Code of RS provides for a special criminal offense: Public provocation and incitement to violence and hatred (Whoever, through the press, radio, television, computer system or social network, in a public gathering or public place or otherwise publicly invites, provokes or encourages or makes available to the public leaflets, pictures or any other material that calls for violence or hatred directed against a particular person or group because of their national, racial, religious or ethnic origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, origin or any other characteristic, shall be punished by a fine or imprisonment of up to three years.) which also criminalizes speech through a computer system or social network based on all prohibited discriminatory grounds. Amendments to the Criminal Code of the RS were adopted in 2023 and two new criminal offenses were prescribed, Unauthorized publication and display of other people's files, portraits and recordings and Misuse of photographs and videos with sexually explicit content, which aim to prevent domestic violence and other forms gender-based violence through information technologies. These amendments to the CCRS are in accordance with the Istanbul Convention.

The applicable regulations adopted at the level of BiH, the FBiH and BD BiH do not contain provisions explicitly related to the prohibition of hate speech online. However, this issue can be seen in the context of criminal law provisions that prohibit and sanction incitement to national, racial and religious hatred, discord and intolerance. Human Rights Ombudsmen of BiH believes that the issue of human rights violations through high-tech activities is a challenge, not only for lawyers and persons engaged in the protection and promotion of human rights, but for every person, given that High-Tec technologies enter all spheres of life. High-tech technologies gain importance when they are used for activities that affect the rights of an individual, especially when they enter the sphere of his private life and when they become an object through which the right to privacy is violated or the security of a person is endangered. In accordance with international human rights standards in such situations, the state is required to provide protection mechanisms. An additional challenge is when using high-tech technologies to endanger the rights of people who are considered particularly vulnerable such as children, women and people with disabilities.

The regulatory framework for electronic media under the jurisdiction of the Communications Regulatory Agency includes the Code on Audiovisual Media Services and Radio Media Services and the Code on Commercial Communications and it contains explicit provisions prohibiting hate speech, encouraging discrimination on various grounds. The Agency is currently in the process of revising both Codes in order to harmonize them with the revised EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2018/1808. In addition, the Communications Regulatory Agency has participated in events aimed at the media, public officials, judicial and police authorities, in order to achieve effective application of the law in this area.

**Strengthen the capacity of government actors for the development of policy and legislation, and their enforcement and implementation**

The Civil Service Agency of BiH included the topic "Recognition of violence against women and domestic violence and the obligation to report violence" in the training program for civil servants. The training, which is implemented once a year, covered nearly 100 civil servants of the Institutions of BiH during the reporting period.



The GC RS continued cooperation with the Women's Network of the RS Ministry of the Interior – WPON, working on preventing and combating gender-based violence (education of 45 police officers on recognizing violence on the Internet and social networks in six police departments of the RS Ministry of the Interior)

In August 2022, the RS Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports launched the campaign "Be Different, Block Hate!", which aims to point out the negative consequences of hate speech, especially among young people, related to social networks and any other type of Internet platforms. The campaign was supported by the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH, which also did a Special Report on Hate Speech in BiH in 2021, and it was also supported by the Youth Council of RS, and public figures and "influencers".

The Communications Regulatory Agency joined the celebration of the Safer Internet Day, under the slogan "Together for a better Internet!" The Safer Internet Day is an international day that has been celebrated for many years at the initiative of the European Commission, with numerous participants in the field of education, child protection, media policy and the telecommunications sector promoting the safe and responsible use of the Internet and digital technologies. Within its competence, the Agency contributes to making the Internet a safer place for all people, especially for children and young people who belong to the group of the most vulnerable users. Given the scope of the Agencies competences, this important date was also recognized as an occasion to promote the joint responsibility of regulators, Internet access providers (ISPs) and parents for the purpose of protecting children on the Internet. Bearing in mind the fact that the protection of children and young people in the online world is important to the same extent as their protection in the real world, as well as the importance of the role of ISPs in the field of protection of children and young people on the Internet, the Agency sent the Guidelines for ICT companies regarding the safety of children on the Internet to all ISPs. In this way, the Agency invited ISPs, as socially responsible companies, to undertake activities within their competence in order to implement these guidelines and to promote educational materials on child safety in the online environment through their websites.

The 2020 International Telecommunication Union Guidelines contain a comprehensive set of recommendations for children, parents and educators, industry and policy makers on developing a safe online environment for children and young people as follows: Guidelines for parents and educators on child safety online; Guidelines for ICT companies regarding the safety of children on the Internet; Guidelines for policymakers on protecting children online; Picture book for children; Children's workbook; Guide for teachers; Social media campaign for teens.

#### **19. Measures taken to resource women's organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV in the past five years**

Answered in the previous sections.

#### **20. Actions taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media, in the past five years**

##### **Enacted, strengthened, and enforced legal reforms to combat discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media**

Bearing in mind the continuous publication of content in print and electronic media in which gender stereotypes, misogynists and sexist elements are evident, AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, on the basis of Article

26 (a) of the Law on Gender Equality in BiH ("Official Gazette of BiH", No. 32/10), and in accordance with Resolution 1751 (2010) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe "Combating Sexist Stereotypes in the Media", adopted the Recommendation regarding gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes and languages in the media in BiH.

The Law on Gender Equality in BiH ("Official Gazette of BiH", No. 32/10) in Article 21, paragraph (2) stipulates the prohibition of public display and representation of any person in an offensive, disparaging or degrading manner, with regard to gender. The consequences of using gender stereotypes and prejudices, sexism and misogyny in the media are, among other things, regulated by the Code on Audiovisual Media Services and Radio Media Services of the BiH Communications Regulatory Agency and the Press and Online Media Code of the BiH Press Council.

It is possible to initiate civil, misdemeanor and criminal liability for the use of gender stereotypes and prejudices, sexism and misogyny in the media, depending on the consequences it has. This responsibility is determined by the Law on Gender Equality in BiH, and the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and Criminal Laws in BiH.

## **21. Actions specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls in the past five years**

### **People with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, or sex characteristics**

The Action Plan for the Advancement of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the LGBT Persons in BiH 2022-2025 has been adopted. The focus of the Action Plan is the achievement of three general objectives: equal opportunities and the prohibition of discrimination, equal rights in all areas of life and a society of respect for diversity.

In this reporting period, the GIMs were also involved in the implementation, coordination and management of several projects in cooperation with international organizations, government institutions and NGOs. The projects were related to the areas of prevention and suppression of violence against women and in the family, participation of women in public and political life, equality of the LGBTI persons, environmental protection, support to women's entrepreneurship, promotion of human rights and anti-discrimination. In addition, gender institutional mechanisms participated in a number of meetings and events related to European integration, recommendations of the UN CEDAW Committee, implementation of the Istanbul Convention and cooperation in combating violence against women, gender budgeting and many others.

In the reporting period, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH used the FIGAP II funds, in the total amount of 110,000 BAM to support the projects for the economic empowerment of women in the context of the COVID19 pandemic, including support for the economic empowerment of Roma women and legal assistance to migrant women through the implementation of the projects:

- "Facilitate access to information and justice for migrant women in BiH" of the Women's Rights Center Zenica, within which a short guide to the basic rights of migrants was developed and an overview of the competent institutions and organizations that provide support and assistance to the competent authorities in the care of migrants. The guide was translated into Urdu, Pashtu, Arabic and Persian, printed in the form of two-page leaflets and distributed in migrant centers.

- In November 2021, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, in cooperation with the BiH Women's Initiative, organized a meeting with international organizations working with migrant women. The issue of prevention of gender-based violence against women-migrants was particularly raised as a problem in the exchange of information and mapping of problems. It was noted that the biggest problem is the violence that takes place outside the reception centers for migrants and the emphasized issue of prevention in the way of finding solutions for the accommodation of migrant women victims of violence. Consequently, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH participated in the drafting of the Protocol of the MHRR and the Ministry of Security of BiH in order to enable the accommodation of women on the move, who are victims of violence at the Salakovac Reception Center.

### Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

#### **Critical areas of concern:**

- G. Women in power and decision-making
- H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

## **22. Actions and measures to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making in the past five years**

### **Introduced temporary special measures, such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks and targets that promote women's participation in politics, especially at decision-making level**

### **Introduced or increased targets and benchmarks of legislative temporary special measures, such as quotas or reserved seats, to promote gender balance or gender parity in legislatures (aiming for 40 per cent or more of seats being occupied by women)**

BiH has adopted important legal standards for equal participation of women and men in decision-making and leadership, which are in line with international human rights treaties. The Law on Gender Equality in BiH is based on these obligations and defines the obligation to promote and ensure equal representation of women and men in all government bodies or bodies under the supervision of public authorities, including political parties. The law further defines that equal representation exists when men and women are equally present in all areas of public and private life. In addition, the Law regulates that equal representation exists in the case when one of the sexes is represented at least 40% in these bodies and prescribes the obligation to adopt special measures (affirmative action measures) if the representation is lower than this percentage. The most obvious example is the Law on Election of BiH, which contains a quota for the underrepresented sex. The Article 4.19 establishes a quota that is mandatory, prescribes a percentage of 40% and has a mandatory ranking rule. The Central Election Commission of BiH has the authority to reject any candidate list that has not been drawn up in accordance with that rule.

The Central Election Commission (CEC BiH), in accordance with the Law on Election of BiH, prepares statistical records by gender, age, classified by electoral districts for each part of the electoral process. Statistical records by gender are kept for: electorate and voter turnout in elections; certified and elected candidates; electoral administration and accredited observers. According to the CEC data, 1

729 215 voters voted in the general elections held in October 2022, of which 49.73% were women and 50.27% were men. According to the review of the participation of men and women and elected officials in the 2022 general elections in BiH, 42% of the candidates were women, and 27.1% of the elected officials were women.

In the local elections held in 2020, women were elected as mayors in the municipalities of Odžak, Drvar, Istočni Drvar, Jezero and Novo Goražde. In the CoM of BiH, as appointed in 2023, a woman was appointed as the Chairman of the CoM for the first time. Another woman was appointed to a ministerial position and 8 men were appointed as ministers, and in the previous CoM there were 7 men serving as ministers and 2 women serving as ministers. In RS, in addition to the Prime Minister, there are 12 men serving as ministers and 4 women serving as ministers. In the Government of the FBiH, the number women serving as ministers in the previous government was 23.4%, and a woman was the deputy prime minister. In the governments of the cantons, the representation of women ranged from 0% to a maximum of 36%. In the previous cantonal governments, the increase in the number of elected women in cantonal assemblies did not necessarily lead to an increase in the number of appointed women, since the average representation of women in cantonal assemblies was 31%, and in cantonal governments it was 15%.

The GC RS analyzed the election processes in the 2018 and 2022 general elections and the 2020 Local Elections, and the representation of women on the lists of candidates, the media during the election process, including the results achieved by the female candidates. The research pointed to the lack of support of political parties to female candidates, the lack of experience of female candidates in public activities, and the lack of support of the electoral body and the lack of support of the media to female candidates in the electoral process. The GC FBiH prepared an Analysis of Data on the Sexual Structure of Candidates after the 2020 Local Elections, which showed a 5.9% increase in the share of women as leaders of lists of political parties compared to 2016.

In the reporting period, the GIMs, civil society organizations and international organizations carried out numerous activities aimed at developing the capacity of women to participate in public and political life. These activities included workshops, focused on the preparation of female candidates, and analyses, research, conferences, seminars and round tables, recommendations addressed to political entities, as well as promotional campaigns on the importance of gender equality in political life. These activities are particularly intensified in pre-election periods for general and local elections.

In July 2020, the Central Election Commission of BiH (hereinafter: CEC BiH) adopted a Statement of Commitment to Gender Equality, which was prepared in cooperation with the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, through which it expressed its determination to take action and initiatives within the framework of its responsibilities to address the issues of gender equality and to address the issue of gender equality in all areas of public and political life. The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, in partnership with the OSCE, on the eve of the 2022 General Elections, invited all 145 political parties to join the Statement of Political Parties on Commitment to Achieving Gender Equality and to express their commitment to respect and strengthen gender equality in their work.

In July 2020, the BiH AGE BiH, MHRR BiH sent an open letter to political parties registered for the 2020 Local Elections - "Nominate and promote female candidates – it benefits everyone!"

**23. Actions taken to increase women’s access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT) in the past five years**

(None.)

**24. Current national women’s machinery, measures taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it**

**Entity ascribed directly to the Head of the Executive or entity whose head directly reports to the head of the Executive**

The institutional framework for gender equality in BiH includes the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH and the GC FBiH and the GC RS as key institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the executive government. The mandates of these institutions are similar and adapted to the constitutional jurisdiction of different levels of government. The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH performs functions related to gender equality in the case of issues for which it is competent at the state level, such as elections and political parties, defense, reporting to bodies of international committees, presentation and coordination of activities, within its competence, at the international and regional level etc. The Gender Centers focus on mainstreaming gender mainstreaming in areas that are within the Entities’ competences and include, inter alia, education, labour, agriculture, home affairs, protection against domestic violence, in cooperation with lower levels of government.

The Gender equality commissions/committees have been established within the legislative authority at all levels. At the state level, there is the Gender Equality Commission of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, and at the entity level, the Gender Equality Commission of the House of Peoples and the Gender Equality Commission of the House of Representatives of the FBiH Parliament, and the Committee of Equal Opportunities of the National Assembly of RS. The commissions for gender equality of cantonal assemblies in FBiH have also been established. Commissions within municipal councils/assemblies operate in almost all municipalities in BiH at the local level.

The percentage of the budget at the BiH level invested annually for the goals of promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment is 0.05%. This share is intended for the work of the institutions of the AGE BiH, the MHRRBiH, including grants to non-governmental organizations in the field of gender equality. It is similar at the entity level, and thus the FBiH Government’s GC estimated that in FBiH approximately 0.05% of the total FBiH budget is allocated for the promotion of gender equality, while the RS Government’s GC estimated that in RS this percentage is approximately 0.04%.

Institutional mechanisms for gender equality, working with the support of international donors, established the Financial Mechanism for the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan (FIGAP program). FIGAP was created with the aim of providing funds for the financing of the implementation of the GAPBiH and FIGAP II for the period 2018-2023. It was developed with the aim of providing financial support to the institutions of BiH, FBiH and RS, as well as non-governmental organizations, for the improvement of socio-economic conditions for men and women, and girls and boys. Financial support for the implementation of the FIGAP II program was provided by the Swedish Agency for International Development and Cooperation in the amount of 15 million SEK (approx. 2.65 million BAM for the period 2018 – 2022). The FIGAP II program is an integral part of the work program and budget of the gender institutional mechanisms. The focus of the action in the reporting period was on the following areas: gender and security, prevention and suppression of gender-based violence, work

and employment, support for the economic empowerment of women in rural areas, public and political life, as well as support for multiple vulnerable groups of women.

## **25. Other mechanisms and tools used to mainstream gender equality across sectors in the past five years**

In the reporting period, further progress could be noted in the systemic approach to introducing the principle of gender equality into the work of the competent institutions of the defense and security sector. Progress has been made through: gender equality trainings included in regular training programs, expansion of the network of appointed contact persons for gender equality issues, improvement and regular updating of the database disaggregated by gender, as well as promotion and promoting military and police as a potential workplace for women. The application of affirmative measures and defining activities to eliminate the identified shortcomings continued, after analyzing the position of women in the defense and security sectors. Measures include recommendations, adjustment of internal propositions, quotas, notes when publishing public and internal advertisements, and when admitting candidates in accordance with performance lists.

An important link in integrating the principles of gender equality into the competent sectoral authorities and their policies is the network of contact persons for gender equality, who are appointed in over 90% of institutions at the level of the Institutions of BiH, RS and FBiH, competent in the priority areas of GAP BiH.

Coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the GAP BiH is achieved through the formation and operation of coordination committees composed of representatives of all ministries of the governments of BiH, RS and the FBiH, and GIMs acted as coordinators of these bodies. The coordination committees established annual operational plans for gender equality and annual reports for the CoM BiH, governments of RS and the FBiH, which improved the institutional implementation and monitoring of the GAP BiH, through the active role of governments and ministries in planning, implementation, reporting and monitoring of impacts.

In August 2018, the CoM of BiH adopted the third Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security in BiH for the period 2018 - 2022, and in August 2019, a Coordination Committee (CoC) was established to supervise the implementation of the Action Plan. Progress was achieved in the systemic approach to introducing the principle of gender equality in the work of the competent institutions of the defense and security sector, as well as greater interest of women in the military and police.

The GC RS coordinated and led the process of developing instruments and work methodology for monitoring of the application of the Istanbul Convention in RS, as well as the Report of RS on the Application of the SE Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period 2017-2018, as a basis for drafting and submitting reports to BiH level on the application of the Convention. The GC RS, as the Coordination Body for Monitoring the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in RS, as well as the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH and GCFBiH, participated in the evaluation process of the GREVIO team.

At the proposal of the GC RS, in 2019, the Government of the RS accepted the Information on Obligations under UN Security Council Resolution "1325" Women, Peace and Security, which presented the obligations of all competent authorities in the implementation of this resolution. The GC RS has been appointed to implement, monitor and report to the Government of RS on programs

and measures under the UNRSC 1325 within its mandate and competence, and to act as a coordinating body of RS.

At the initiative of the GC RS, the RS Government formed the RS Coordination Committee for monitoring of the implementation of the GAP BiH for the period 2018-2022, whose members were appointed representatives of all RS ministries. At the proposal of the GC RS, the Coordination Committee determined, and the Government of RS adopted, the annual operational plans for gender equality in RS within the implementation of the GAP BiH 2018 - 2022, as well as annual reports on the implementation of the operation plans.

The Coordination Team for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of FBIH was established to strengthen links and cooperation between competent authorities and non-governmental organizations that carry out activities to effectively identify risky situations and potential victims of trafficking in human beings, prosecute perpetrators of criminal offenses related to trafficking in human beings, assist and protect victims and preventive action.

The GC FBIH issued a recommendation to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Sarajevo Canton to harmonize regulations, as well as a recommendation to the Federal Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter: FMES), to initiate activities through the Coordination of Ministers of Education and Science in the FBIH in order to enable the use of gender-responsive language in diplomas issued by universities in the FBIH, and the FMES informed the competent cantonal ministries about this. In addition, the ministry has significantly improved the data collection and publication system by introducing indicators on children who leave school with reasons for leaving. These data are published in the Statistical Bulletin of the Federal Statistical Institute. The FMES has been providing support for training, vocational training and training programs for adults with a focus on women for many years in order to facilitate integration into the labour market.

Some progress has been made regarding the participation of women in the total number of employees in the RS Ministry of Interior, which currently amounts to 23.2% of the total number of employees in the RS Ministry of Interior. As a result of promotional activities, there is an increase in the number of candidates for police training, which nevertheless did not lead to an increase in the number of women in the total number of candidates. Regular trainings on gender-based violence, sexual orientation and violence against the LGBT community are conducted within the Ministry of the Interior.

## **26. Measures taken by the national human rights institution in BiH to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality**

The institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman is an independent institution dealing with the protection of the rights of natural and legal persons, in accordance with the Constitution of BiH and international agreements in the appendix to the Constitution.

The Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH considers cases related to poor functioning or human rights violations committed by any body of BiH, its Entities and the Brčko District. Cases are formed on the basis of individual complaints of legal or natural persons or ex officio.

## Peaceful and inclusive societies

### **Critical areas of concern:**

- E. Women and armed conflict
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

## **27. Actions taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda in the past five years**

### **Adopted and/or implemented a National Action Plan on women, peace and security**

As previously explained the third Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security in BiH for the period 2018-2022 was adopted. The Coordination Committee (CoC) was established and further progress in the systemic approach to introducing the principle of gender equality in the work of the competent institutions of the defense and security sector was achieved. The AP 1325 for the period 2023-2027 was prepared.

In the reporting period, there was another international recognition of BiH's achievements in the field of implementation of the UN Resolution 1325. Namely, at the G7 Foreign Ministers' Summit, at which the "G7 Women, Peace and Security Partnership Initiative" was established, each G7 member country identified one partner country in order to "intensify positive changes on the ground". The EU has chosen BiH as a partner. The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH has developed a Roadmap with European partners that defines joint actions in the next two years.

The MoD BiH and the AF BiH have a strong institutional framework that supports the continuous and sustainable integration of gender perspectives, which is evident through the implementation of obligations arising from the UNSCR 1325 and other resolutions that make up the program "Women, Peace and Security", including the implementation of the NATO partner goal G 0013, "Women, Peace and Security". The implementation of the previous three action plans led to the creation of a more favorable environment for increasing the interest and participation of women in the military forces. The Gender Equality Policy in the MoD of BiH and the AF of BiH was adopted in 2019, and one of the defined goals in it is "achieving real gender equality defined by the Law on Gender Equality in BiH". The need to improve the living and working conditions at military locations for women and men was pointed out in accordance with part of the recommendations and measures from the Gender Analysis of the AF BiH. In the period from 2019 to 2022, the Infrastructure Improvement Team of the AF BiH prepared excerpts from conceptual designs for infrastructure investments at 147 facilities at 29 locations of the AF BiH.

As part of the measures for the implementation of Resolution 1325, as well as other international acts in the field of gender equality, which were ratified by BiH, the MoD BiH and the AF BiH joined the Joint Chiefs of Staff Network "Women, Peace and Security". As part of this project, the MoD and the AF BiH conducted a comprehensive gender analysis that resulted in 51 specific recommendations and proposals for improving the situation in this area. Experts in the field of gender equality from the United Kingdom assessed the subject gender analysis as a unique example in the world. The results of the subject gender analysis also showed the great progress of the Armed Forces of BiH in the field of gender equality, which is also visible through the increase in the percentage of women in the Armed



Forces, which today amounts to 9% of women in the AF BiH, who are represented at all levels. command and control, as well as in the range of ranks from soldier to brigadier.

In addition to the above, the MoD BiH analyzed a total of 329 sub-legal regulations and acts and determined that specific norms should be added to 133 regulations in order to harmonize them with the law on gender equality and the law on prohibition of discrimination.

The MoD BiH and the AF BiH achieved progress in the process of recruitment, training, including training for Peace Support Operations and career development. As an example of good practice of the MoD BiH and the Armed Forces of BiH, the measures taken within the framework of the implementation of affirmative measures given in the Law on Gender Equality, the MoD BiH adopted provisions in the regulations on admission and education and training and career development that regulate, yes, in the event that two or more candidates for admission to the AF BiH or who will be allocated for education in different schools, have the same number of points according to the given criteria, preference is given to the candidate of the gender that is less represented in the AF BiH. The number of women who applied for admission to the AF BiH increased significantly, so that the percentage of women in officer training for admission to service in the period from 2016 to 2019 ranged from 12 to 25%. Women perform a wide range of duties in the AF BiH, from leadership and command duties to various specialist duties. They are also referred to peacekeeping missions around the world, such as NATO, but also UN and EU missions. This has improved the operational efficiency of the armed forces as balanced units with an integrated gender perspective improve the level and operational capabilities.

The MoD BiH, together with the Ministries of Defense of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, participates in the regional project: "Support for the integration of the principles of gender equality in the reform of the security sector in the Western Balkans" organized by UNDP/SEESAC. As part of this project, regular meetings of representatives of mechanisms for gender equality of the ministries of defense and armed forces of the Western Balkans, as well as meetings of trainers for gender equality, are held twice a year. These meetings are a form of exchange of experiences and lessons learned. Participation in this project resulted in many trainings, the development of various analyzes and studies on the position of women in the Armed Forces, the Regional Manual on the Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Abuse, the Regional Baseline Study for the Integration of a Gender Perspective in Military Education and Training in the Ministries of Defense of the Western Balkans, Handbook on gender and gender issues.

As a continuation of activities on the normative regulation of the area, the MoD of BiH adopted the Rulebook on gender equality in the MoD and the AF BiH, by which gender perspectives, both formally and substantively, are included in the entire defense system.

Taking into account the specific perspectives, as well as the needs of current and future members, the AF BiH is committed to ensure equal access to opportunities, as well as career progress of women during the performance of professional duties. Improvements in the infrastructure at military and police locations were essential elements of the functioning of the defense and security system. The MoD of BiH has conducted activities aiming at motivating as many young women and men as possible to start a career in the AF of BiH after high school or university schools. In addition, the MoD BiH and the AF BiH continuously carry out activities on the promotion of the military as profession in accordance with the Dynamic Campaign Plan for the Promotion of the Military as profession in the AF BiH.

The Ministry of Security of BiH regularly submits to the AGE BiH MHRR regulations and strategies for an opinion on compliance with the Law on Gender Equality in BiH. Other competent institutions and agencies for the implementation of the law take into account the compliance of regulations with the LGE. For example, the Rulebook on the Internal Organization of SIPA prescribes the obligation to analyze the compliance of regulations that SIPA applies with laws and other regulations, including the Law on Gender Equality. The application of affirmative measures and defining activities to eliminate the identified shortcomings continued. The measures include recommendations, harmonization of internal proposals, quotas, notes when publishing public and internal advertisements, and when admitting candidates in accordance with their success lists. The State Investigation and Protection Agency promotes the police profession and encourages women to apply for jobs in the police, and this has contributed to the trend of increasing the number of women.

As a result of promotional activities of the RS Ministry of the Interior an increase in the number of female candidates for police training was noted but this did not lead to a significant increase in the number women in the total number of candidates for police service. The community police conducts activities aiming at animating a larger number of young women to apply for the police service.

Activities to introduce a gender perspective into regular training programs in police and military structures continued, with the aim of implementing training on gender equality in a planned manner. The FBiH Police Directorate has adopted the 2019-2024 Human Resources Management Strategy. One of the results of the analysis conducted in order to develop the Strategy is that out of the total number of police officers, only 10.34% are female, and as a measure, it is proposed to conduct a media campaign to attract candidates for work in the Federal Police Administration, with a special focus on attracting female candidates. The GC FBiH regularly coordinates and supports the organization of trainings within the FBiH Police Academy as well as specialist trainings with cantonal MoIs that contribute to the development of the capacity of police officers to respond to the security needs of women and men, boys and girls.

When it comes to current security threats and challenges, activities and analyses were initiated that indicate the different position, needs and interests of women and men in conditions of natural disasters, migration, terrorism, extremism and radicalism, the use of small arms and light weapons, and in crisis and emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a specific impact on the physical, health and economic security of women. These issues are partly addressed in the strategic documents of the Ministry of Security of BiH such as the Strategy in the field of migration and asylum and the Action Plan (2021-2025) who recognize the needs and interests of vulnerable categories in migration, especially women and minors, as well as persons without parental care. Due to insufficient systemic protection, a large part of the care and support for migrants is carried out by international and non-governmental organizations, with a focus on victims of gender-based violence. In November 2021, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, in cooperation with the Initiative of Women of BiH, developed the Protocol of the MHRR and the MS of BiH in order to provide accommodation for women on the move, victims of violence, and the implementation of activities that would make information on the protection of women available. The BiH Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Terrorism (for the period 2021-2026) and the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy also include activities on the topic of gender perspective in the context of violent extremism and terrorism, especially in the part related to prevention. At the proposal of the MoJ of BiH, the Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons in BiH (2021-2024) and the Action Plan of the Strategy was adopted and include goals and activities aimed at integrating a gender perspective into measures for

the control of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in particular in relation to the misuse of firearms in the context of domestic violence and intimate partner violence.

## **28. Actions taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings in the past five years**

### **Promoted and supported women's meaningful participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements at all levels**

Numerous educational and promotional activities were carried out during the implementation of the AP UNSCR 1325 in BiH in order to raise the awareness of the professional and general public about the importance of gender equality issues, greater participation of women in decision-making in achieving peace and security, and the importance of the UNSC Resolution 1325 and related UNSCRs. Promotion and trainings on gender equality for employees of the institutions of the defense and security sector, which are represented in the CB, were held within the framework of various initiatives and projects of the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, international and non-governmental organizations. They have significantly contributed to increasing knowledge level, but it is important to point out that the approach to capacity building has been significantly improved in the previous three years. Trainings are now increasingly planned in accordance with the needs of individual sectors/organizational units of institutions and are included in regular training plans and programs in institutions and agencies. During the implementation of the AP UNSCR 1325, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, competent institutions, non-governmental and international organizations promoted topics related to the UNSCR 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" either through targeted promotional activities, events and materials, or through the inclusion of these topics in other promotional actions. The campaigns focused on the affirmation and promotion of the military as profession, the promotion of women's participation in the police, army and peacekeeping missions, and the role and influence of women in political and public decision-making, especially in the context of general and local elections held in the reporting period.

The AF BiH generally have a problem with the lack of interest of the population in employment in this sector. There is also a noticeable trend of leaving employment in the AF BiH. In the conditions of lack of interest in employment and increasing the trend of leaving employment, it is necessary to find new ways of attracting new employees. These two trends also negatively affect the interest of women in employment and remaining at existing employment in the AF BiH. In addition to the economic factors that affect job abandonment and/or staying with the AF BiH, additional efforts need to be made to show women in the AF BiH that they are equal and that their specific needs are respected. Strategic, continuous work on the implementation of the AP UNSCR 1325 in BiH, i.e. on improving the working conditions of women in the AF BiH, can be one of the additional ways to keep the existing female soldiers and female officers in the AF BiH.

At the same time, the promotion of the achieved results and progress within the AP UNSCR BiH can positively affect the motivation and interest of women in potential employment in the AF BiH. In addition to educational, a number of promotional activities were carried out, especially in the context of the 2018 general elections.

The Association "Network of Female Police Officers in BiH" is one of the key allies in formulating the needs as well as challenges faced by women working in security sector institutions. The Network of

Female Police Officers in BiH continuously carries out advocacy activities to improve the position of women in police structures, promote and apply the principle of gender equality when employing women in the police, as well as on issues of education, training, career development and promotion of the results of the Network. Although some successes are symbolic – e.g. the abolition of use of male names for titles or increased visibility of women from security sector institutions at public events or in internal and external publications, these seemingly small steps are important in changing institutional culture.

According to the MS BiH data from 2021, the presence of female police officers in UN peacekeeping missions (South Sudan and Cyprus) was on average about 50%. In the South Sudan mission, 4 police officers were deployed, of which one was a woman, which amounted to 25%. In Cyprus, out of a total of 8 members of the contingent, there were 5 women, which amounted to 62.5%. Data from 2022 show a decrease in this percentage in both missions. In 2022, 13 police officers were deployed in the BiH police contingent in South Sudan and there were no female officers. There are a total of 7 police officers in Cyprus, of which 2 female police officers or 28.57%. As for the entire period of implementation of the AP 1325 2018 - 2022, the presence of female police officers in peacekeeping missions ranged from 30% to 35% and is continuously increasing, thanks to the application of the affirmative measure.

The Advisory Committee for the Protection of Female Human Rights Defenders in BiH was established in March 2023 with the aim to coordinate activities to improve the position of female human rights defenders through mutual cooperation between institutions and the non-governmental sector. The Advisory Committee was on the basis of the Protocol on the Protection of Female Human Rights Defenders. The Advisory Board consists of representatives of the institutions of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH, the Gender Equality Agency of BiH, the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH, the Communications Regulatory Agency of BiH, the Ministry of Justice of BiH, and the Foundation of Local Democracy on behalf of the civil society organizations – female human rights defenders and the Association of Women "MOST" Višegrad as an alternate member.

A campaign on women human rights defenders was conducted to raise awareness and inform the general public about their role and importance of action in the protection of human rights in all areas of society. The general objective of the project is to improve the position of female human rights defenders through mutual cooperation between institutions and the non-governmental sector.

On the occasion of marking the 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UN Women, with the support of the Embassy of Austria in BiH, held a dialogue on the work of human rights defenders in Banja Luka.

## **29. Actions taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response in the last five years**

Trafficking in human beings, especially trafficking in women for the purpose of prostitution, remains a challenge in BiH. The opening of state borders, the transition to a market economy, the increase in unemployment and poverty, and the reduction of movement controls in some parts of Europe have created favorable conditions for the development of illegal trade, especially trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation. In the period of implementation of the GAP BiH for the period 2018-

2022, progress was made in the field of establishing a legislative, strategic and institutionally operational framework for the protection and prevention and suppression of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, as well as human trafficking.

BiH is a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficking in human beings for the purpose of forced begging, sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and forced marriages. The number of potential victims of trafficking detected in 2018 was 36. More than half of the detected potential victims were children, and almost two thirds of the detected potential victims were women. In 2018, there were 48 convicted perpetrators and 36 victims compared to 17 convicted perpetrators and 83 victims in 2017.

The Law on Foreigners of BiH is harmonized with the articles of the CoE Convention on the Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings and Directive 2004/81/EC of the European Parliament on granting residence permit to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings or who have been assisted to migrate illegally and cooperate with the competent authorities. The provisions refer to protection and assistance to victims of trafficking who have been granted temporary residence in BiH for humanitarian reasons. The Law on Asylum, prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender characteristics, as well as amendments to the Criminal Code, which provide for stricter penalties for perpetrators of trafficking in human beings. Trafficking in human beings is criminalised in the CC BiH with a focus on victims which don't have citizenship or residence, while other criminal offenses of trafficking in human beings are covered by the criminal laws of the entities and the BD.

The criminal laws of the FBiH, RS and BD are harmonized with the Criminal Code of BiH. These amendments also strengthen the penalties for the criminal offense in question, and the basic form of the offense is punishable by a prison sentence of at least 5 years (instead of the previous 3 years), while the trafficking of minors, as well as the commission of the criminal offense by an official during the performance of official duty, is punishable by a prison sentence of at least 10 years (instead of the previous 5 years). Amendments to the Criminal Code of RS from 2021 stipulate forced begging as a form of exploitation of victims of human trafficking.

The Manual for Conducting Investigations in Human Trafficking Cases issued in 2020 provides practical tools to help law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices conduct effective investigations in human trafficking cases, with a particular focus on the protection of victims. The manual is primarily intended for prosecutors and police officers.

At the beginning of 2020, the CoM BiH adopted the Strategy for Countering Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH for the period 2020-2023, and subsequently the Action Plan of BiH institutions for the implementation of the Strategy. A multidisciplinary approach to the implementation of the Plan implies the involvement and partnership of all competent institutions at all levels of government in BiH. The Department for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Ministry of Security has formed regional monitoring teams, with the aim of achieving appropriate standards and improving functional links between the competent authorities and NGOs in BiH.

In the context of the implementation of the above Action Plan, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH in 2020 established a grant program of 60,000 BAM for direct assistance and protection of victims of human trafficking, BiH citizens, and for the sustainability of safe houses.

In order to strengthen the system of protection of victims of trafficking in human beings in BiH, the Ministry of Security of BiH has developed the document "Guide for Multidisciplinary Cooperation in the Process of Rehabilitation, Resocialization, Reintegration and Repatriation of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH", which is a practical instruction to all subjects of victim protection, especially social welfare centers.

The AGE BiH, of the MHRR BiH implemented a grant program within the Financial Instrument for the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan of BiH (FIGAP II), in the amount of 80,000 BAM for the area of "Gender and Security" through the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in BiH, which, among other things, included projects relevant for the prevention of trafficking in human beings.

Internal trafficking in human beings prevails in RS, whose victims are mostly domestic citizens, who are exploited by domestic citizens. The Action Plan for Countering Trafficking in Human Beings 2020 – 2023 has been in force in RS since 2020. The implementation of this plan is supervised by the team for monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan. In this regard, and the Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has been appointed, and six regional monitoring teams for combating trafficking in human beings, consisting of representatives of prosecutors' offices, police, labour inspection and social work centers as well. The Anti-Trafficking Coordination Team in FBiH, established in 2021, works to strengthen links and cooperation between competent authorities and NGOs that carry out activities to effectively identify risky situations and potential victims of trafficking in human beings, prosecute perpetrators in connection with trafficking in human beings, help and protect victims, as well as preventive action on possible causes leading to this phenomenon. The coordination team consists of representatives of all competent institutions and non-governmental organizations that carry out activities to combat and prevent trafficking in human beings.

### **30. Actions taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls in the last five years**

Discrimination is prohibited in the BiH legal system primarily by the BiH Constitution, and then by the entity constitutions and the BDBiH Statute, and by domestic legislation. Following the above international standards, BiH has incorporated the principle of equal treatment into its legal system, and has recognized discrimination as a public social problem by adopting the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and the Law on Gender Equality. The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination in BiH has established an appropriate legal framework for the exercise of equal rights and opportunities for all persons in BiH and a system of protection against discrimination.

A legal basis was created with the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality in BiH that enabled significant progress to be made in the integration of key international standards and principles governing gender equality.

## **Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation**

### **Critical areas of concern:**

- I. Human rights of women
- K. Women and the environment
- L. The girl child

### **31. Actions taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation in the past five years**

The GAP BiH 2023-2027 defines gender equality as one of the priority areas of action in the context of environmental protection and climate change. As a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), BiH has recognized the importance of equal involvement of women and men in the UNFCCC processes and in the development and implementation of gender-responsive climate policies. BiH is one of 41 countries in the world, and the second in the Western Balkans, which has finalized and submitted its Climate Change Adaptation Plan (NAP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The NAP process was created at the 2010 Climate Change Conference (COP 16) to enable least developed countries and other developing countries to formulate and implement national adaptation plans as a means to identify medium- and long-term adaptation needs and to develop and implement strategies and programs to address these needs. NAPs help countries meet their commitments stemming from the Paris Agreement and the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This Plan contains an analysis of the existing regulatory framework and technical studies in BiH, climate change trends, future climate projections, an overview of climate change impacts by sector, and proposals for medium-term measures to reduce the negative impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable sectors, including agriculture, water and forest resources, biodiversity and tourism. The ultimate goal of the NAP is to reduce the effects of climate change on both the most vulnerable sectors and the population. The process of BiH joining the European Union remains one of the main drivers of environmental reforms. Socio-economic factors affect people's exposure and vulnerability to environmental problems, which is particularly visible in disadvantaged groups (European Environment Agency in 2018; who in 2019). Likewise, solutions to environmental change themselves are not socially neutral. BiH is a member of the UN Economic Commission for the European Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice on Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), in which States Parties are called upon to at least "guarantee the right of access to information, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters in accordance with the provisions of this Convention" (UNECE 1998, Article 1, par. 3).

The process of drafting the BiH 2030+ Environmental Strategy was an example of an inclusive approach to public policy development that includes a consultative process with a large number of institutional and non-institutional actors. During the development, the GIMs pointed out that all areas of the environment are relevant from the aspect of gender equality, but that environmental management, developing awareness and understanding are especially relevant, which is why it is important to look at environmental issues in the context of different roles, needs and interests of women and men. Strategic planning now recognizes that solutions for environmental change are not socially neutral and aims to strengthen environmental policy in BiH through approaches to gender equality, social justice and poverty reduction, taking into account interconnectedness. Gender equality is integrated into a single document of all 7 action plans. Thus, the Environmental Action Plan defines how it is necessary to integrate the principles of gender equality, social equality and poverty issues into all phases of environmental management (planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, evaluation).

Several FBiH strategies are being developed (in the field of agriculture and rural development, environmental protection, tourism development, social inclusion, etc.), with consultations with the GC FBiH in order to include the principles and standards of gender equality. The GCFBiH actively participated and provided expert support in the process of drafting the FBiH Development Strategy 2021 – 2027, which defines comprehensive strategic development priorities, respecting the principles of gender equality in all relevant areas.

The Environmental Strategy document in BiH for the period until 2032 consists of strategies and action plans for four levels of government (level of BiH, FBiH, RS and BD. At the proposal of the Federal Ministry of the Environment and tourism, the FBiH Government has adopted the FBiH Environmental Protection Strategy 2022-2032, which recognizes among its priorities "Priority 7.4: Ensure a high level of public awareness of the importance of environmental protection and involvement in the decision-making process, especially the involvement of women, young people and the socially sensitive. The Environmental Protection Strategy of the RS was adopted in 2022, in which issues of gender equality, social equality and poverty were also integrated.

The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH in cooperation with the Commission for Gender Equality of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, the OSCE Mission TO BiH and UN Women, organized a conference "Gender Equality in the Context of Environmental Protection and Climate Change" on the occasion of marking the March 8<sup>th</sup> – International Women's Day. It was pointed out the need to include the perspective of gender equality in measures to overcome the causes and consequences of endangering the environment, mitigating the risk of disasters and climate change.

### **32. Actions taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience in the past five years**

(None.)



## SECTION FOUR: INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

### 33. Strategy or action plan for gender equality

The GAP BiH, for the period 2023-2027 contains three strategic goals within which priority areas of action are defined, i.e. programs and measures necessary to achieve this goal:

1. Development, implementation and monitoring of programs of measures to improve gender equality in government institutions, by priority areas
2. Building and strengthening systems, mechanisms and instruments to achieve gender equality
3. Establishing and strengthening cooperation and partnerships

The measures listed in GAP 2023-2027 are

- Identification of priority laws and implementation of gender analysis, strategies, action plans, programs and other acts in the field of environmental management with the aim of introducing and applying international and domestic standards for gender equality in this area and identifying disadvantages, advantages, real needs and opportunities from the aspect of gender equality.
- Improve the system for collecting gender-sensitive data and define a set of gender-sensitive quantitative and qualitative indicators in the field of environmental management.
- Identify gender issues for research, especially from the aspect of gender-sensitive impacts on human health and exposure to natural disasters.
- Raise awareness of different types of new technologies in the field of environmental management and non-technical innovations that save time and energy and are tailored to the different needs of women and men.
- Conduct educational activities on the application of gender mainstreaming and special measures and instruments in the context of environmental management, include information on NGO sector interventions to raise environmental awareness.
- Encourage financial allocations for specifically targeted interventions to improve social and gender equality, for the economic empowerment of vulnerable social groups, especially women, in the field of so-called green entrepreneurship, reuse of recycled waste, etc.
- Establish an adequate and consistent monitoring system.
- Establish an electronic platform on the values of integrating the gender component in the field of conservation and environmental protection.

Government bodies at the state and entity level, bodies of the BD BiH, cantonal and bodies of local self-government units are listed as holders of responsibilities, in accordance with the line competencies prescribed by the applicable legal regulations, and the implementation deadline is from 2023 to 2027.

### 34. System for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area

The principle of budget impact analysis for different needs of women and men (gender-responsive budgeting). When planning activities and making analyses of the situation in certain areas, it is

necessary for each budget beneficiary to perform an analysis in order to assess the impact of existing budget funds on meeting different needs of women and men. This analysis should serve as a basis for planning activities by the GAP BiH areas.

In accordance with the goals and priority areas from the GAP BiH, gender mechanisms continuously support the process of introducing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) into the budget system in BiH, which is an important instrument, but also a practical measure that promotes and improves gender equality. The main goal to be achieved by the mentioned measures is to make the application of gender equality standards part of the regular programs and budgets of institutions. Thus, the new Draft Law on the Budget of the BiH Institutions and International Obligations of BiH from 2021 stipulated that budget beneficiaries with planned current grants and transfers must put an obligation on end users of current grants and transfers to include a gender aspect when allocating funds, as well as when reporting on earmarked spending of funds." The situation regarding the allocation of the funds from the budget of the competent institutions of BiH to finance activities on promotion and achievement of gender equality has not changed significantly. The institutions still do not allocate special funds to finance these activities, nor have the conditions for the systematic introduction and implementation of gender-responsive budgeting been met. Therefore, as already mentioned, the GIMs rely significantly on international support and make efforts to find additional donor funds.

The GC FBiH has prepared an Analysis of the Legal Framework and a proposal of measures to include the principles of gender equality and the principles of gender-responsive budgeting in the process of employment and training of civil servants. The FBiH Ministry of Finance has developed Guidelines for the Inclusion of the Principles of Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Responsible Budgeting in the Process of Planning, Awarding and Monitoring the Impact of Grants (e.g. additional points are awarded for female grant beneficiaries from the agriculture and entrepreneurship sectors, and a measure of employer stimulation for the employment of women victims of domestic violence has also been introduced).

More than 100 parliamentarians at the state and entity level and 150 municipal councilors from 21 municipalities have improved their capacities regarding gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting. An online course on gender-responsive budgeting is available for 17,000 civil servants.

It is expected that the legal framework will be amended to include instructions on the adoption of the budget in the program format. Once the legislative framework is updated, budget beneficiaries should be given appropriate instructions regarding what the principles of gender-responsive budgeting are and how the principles of gender-responsive budgeting should be applied to budget planning, as well as what evidence should be collected to measure its impact. Such policy guidelines may be regulated by subordinate legislation, and support should be available to enable their consistent application. Given that the responsibility for the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting should be borne by budget users, it is important to recognize the opportunities that exist within the legislative framework, which regulate the ways of current programming.

### **35. Formal mechanisms for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are an integral part of all *efforts of institutional mechanisms for gender equality in BiH and they are integrated into the GAP BiH. Efforts are underway*

*to use the SDG indicators in monitoring progress in the field of gender equality. **Report with recommendations for improving monitoring and evaluation of the GAP BiH** containing monitoring indicators, which, among other things, are aligned with the SDG indicators. In this context, activities on the participatory process in the development of the GAP BiH and accompanying documents contribute directly to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration.*

In preparation for the comprehensive national-level review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), a series of three online meetings were held involving the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH, the Gender Centre of FBiH, the Gender Centre of RS, and UN Women. These meetings focused on critical aspects of the review process, including data sources, consultation meetings, and the draft report. In accordance with the participatory and inclusive approach to strategic planning and implementation of activities in the field of gender equality, the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH organized five consultative meetings with non-governmental organizations and relevant institutions from all levels of government.

### **36. Stakeholders' contribution to the preparation of the present national report**

The GIMs with a significant support from UN Women in BiH conducted a comprehensive national-level review of gender equality with the participation of all sectors of the government. The review was conducted in line with the Guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews for the Thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and focused on a comprehensive national-level review with an aim to assess progress made in implementation and identify challenges encountered.

The discussions during consultation events were divided into two sessions, allowing for a thorough examination of each dimension's current status, challenges, and potential strategies for improvement. Participants shared insights, best practices, and proposed innovative solutions to address the gaps identified in the implementation process. The interactive nature of the discussions fostered a collaborative atmosphere, encouraging participants to learn from each other's experiences and expertise.

Overall, the consultation and validation meetings proved to be successful with a significant participation and involvement of over 80 participants representing the civil society and institution from different parts and levels of government. It can be concluded that more stakeholders have participated indirectly in drafting of the report since the data used in the desk research was based on the information collected from the variety of stakeholders by the national gender institutional mechanisms continuously.

### **37. Action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women**

BiH directs all its efforts to implement the obligations under the CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, UPR and other international obligations through the adoption of the Gender Action Plan of BiH. The same applies to other policies in the field of gender equality, which are increasingly striving to integrate BiH's international obligations and recommendations.



## SECTION FIVE: DATA AND STATISTICS

### 38. The most important progress in gender statistics over the past five years

#### Produced knowledge products on gender statistics

The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH coordinated the collection of data every year and prepared an average of 10 reports according to the international obligations and requirements of the UN, CoE, European Commission, OSCE/ODHIR and others, as well as the preparation of various information and answers to questionnaires regarding the achievement of gender equality and overcoming various forms of discrimination on the basis of gender in BiH. The GIMs coordinate the collection of data at the level of BiH institutions or entities for the preparation of the aforementioned documents.

The AGE BiH, the MHRR, in cooperation with the GC FBiH and GC RS, prepared three annual reports on the implementation of the GAP BiH, which were submitted to the CoM BiH for adoption. The reports contained information from institutions at the level of BiH, FBiH, RS and BD BiH on the activities carried out, related to legislative, strategic and promotional activities related to the implementation of the principle of gender equality, and cooperation with international actors, institutions, non-governmental organizations, etc. Gender Centers also regularly reported to entity governments on progress in the implementation of the GAP BiH.

Report on the implementation of the GAP BiH in the period 2018 – 2022 was adopted in March 2023, and it also represents the Report on the State of Gender Equality in BiH for 2022, in accordance with Article 26, paragraph a) of the Law on Gender Equality BiH.

The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH, in cooperation with the GCFBiH and GC RS and the competent bodies of the Brcko District of BiH, implemented the process of preparing reports on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter: Istanbul Convention). A field visit of a team of experts in October 2021 who monitored the implementation of the Istanbul Convention (hereinafter: GREVIO) was carried out and they visited relevant institutions at all levels of the government in BiH.

Numerous studies have been conducted that include, among other things,

- Research on the impact of gender division of family and household tasks on the professional life of employed women in BiH
- "Women and Men in BiH"
- "Women and Men in the FBiH",
- "Women and Men in RS"
- Analysis on the collection and recording of gender-disaggregated data in BiH institutions
- Report on progress in the application of normative and legal standards for gender equality in the field of political and public life in RS for the period 2019-2020
- On the way to the Gender Equality Index of BiH 2022 Sarajevo: United Nations Agency for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
- Gender Equality Index in BiH 2023
- Gender profile of the country BiH. 2001 Sarajevo, BiH
- Social Inclusion in BiH: National Human Development Report 2020
- Gender pay gap in the Federation of BiH.

- Research on the human rights of mothers and the development of parenthood in BiH.

### 39. Priorities for strengthening national gender statistics over the next five years

Years of efforts and cooperation between the Agency for Statistics of BiH and AGE BiH, MHRR BiH resulted in the development of the first Gender Equality Index for BiH, an important tool recognized by the EU, for monitoring the state of gender equality. The index was developed according to the methodology of the European Institute for Gender Equality - EIGE from Vilnius and, for now, includes two full domains – "knowledge" and "power", and two additional domains - "work" and "health" – where individual subdomains were calculated. The index identified the initial, i.e. "*baseline*", state of gender equality, which will enable monitoring of progress in the coming period, as well as comparison with the countries of the region and the EU.

The Gender Equality Index in BiH for 2023 was calculated by the BiH Agency for Statistics in 2023. The data used to calculate the index results are from 2020, 2021 and 2022, depending on the indicators. The Gender Equality Index in BiH 2023 includes results for three full domains - Knowledge, Power and Time, providing data and calculations for the respective sub-domains Achievement and Participation for the Knowledge domain, all three sub-domains - Political Power, Economic Power and Social Power for the Power domain, and the sub-domains Care and nurturing and Social Activities for the Time domain. The index also includes partial results for two domains - Work and Health and their individual subdomains - Status and Access, excluding the subdomain Behavior for the domain Health, and the subdomain Participation, and excluding the subdomain Segregation and Quality of Work for the domain Work. The Gender Equality Index in BiH 2023 does not include information for the Money domain or its individual subdomains due to the lack of relevant surveys, other data sources and gender disaggregated data. For this reason, it is not possible to calculate the overall Gender Equality Index for BiH and make comparisons with the EU average and individual Member States and candidate countries. Full comparisons with the EU average and Member States are only possible in the Knowledge and Power domains. Comparisons in the domains Work and Health are possible only at the level of subdomains for which data and calculations were available. Comparisons in the Time domain with results of the EU and Member States are not possible due to differences in research methodologies.

Regular surveys containing gender-disaggregated data are currently being conducted, such as the Labour Force Survey, Demography, Education, Household Spending Survey, and Household Budget Survey, while the implementation of the Income and Living Conditions Survey and the Income Structure Survey is planned.

### 40. Gender-specific indicators prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs

According to the Framework for the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in BiH adopted in 2020, the following indicators related to SDG 5 are envisaged:

**Target 5.1:** End all forms of discrimination against women and girls – Substitute SDG indicator 5.1.1: Gender Development Index (GDI)

**Target 5.4:** Recognize and evaluate unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and through the promotion of shared responsibility in the household and family, in a manner appropriate in the respective country –

Adapted SDG indicator 5.4.1.a: Proportion of economically inactive persons aged 20-64 who are inactive due to other family responsibilities (other than caring for children and incapacitated adults or infirm persons), and Adapted SDG indicator 5.4.1.b: Proportion of economically inactive persons aged 20-64 who are inactive due to childcare or infirm adults

**Target 5.5:** Ensure that women participate fully and effectively and have equal opportunities to participate in leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life – Adapted SDG indicator 5.5.1: Share of seats occupied by women in parliaments (%)

In addition to the above, the following indicators are also monitored by gender:

Adapted SDG indicator 3.4.1: NCD mortality rates (per 1,000 population)

**Target 4.1:** By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equal and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes – Substitute SDG indicator 4.1.1.a: Average number of years of schooling

**Target 4.3:** By the end of 2030, ensure equal access to cheap and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university, for all women and men – SDG indicator 4.3.1: Participation rate of young people and adults in formal and non-formal education and training during the previous 12 months, by gender

**Target 8.2:** Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological improvement and innovation, inter alia, focusing on labour-intensive and highly profitable sectors – Substitute SDG indicator 8.2.2: Estimated GDP (2011 PPP \$), by sex

**Target 8.3:** Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, the creation of dignified jobs, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation; encourage the formal establishment and growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, among other things, through access to financial services – Adapted SDG indicator 8.3.1: Share of informal employment in non-agricultural activities, by gender

**Target 8.5:** By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value – Substitute SDG indicator 8.5.2: Employment rate

Substitute SDG indicator 10.1.1.b: Possession of accounts in a financial institution

**Target 16.1:** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates – Adapted SDG indicator 16.1.1: Intentional homicide per 100,000 population

#### **41. Data disaggregation routinely provided by major surveys in BiH**

In BiH, statistical data are collected and processed primarily disaggregated by gender, age, level of education, marital status and geographical location. Special statistical surveys, including the list, contain other categories such as ethnicity, religion, etc.

## SECTION SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Progress can be noted by examining the scope and importance of measures and activities implemented in the reporting period, as a number of significant activities have been implemented that contribute to the achievement of legal, institutional and social preconditions for greater gender equality in BiH, but also address areas where progress is still not at the level expected.

BiH has developed key instruments for actions for gender equality by adopting the Law on Gender Equality in BiH, through the activities of gender equality institutions and by adopting the Gender Action Plan of BiH and other gender equality policies. The Law establishes the obligations of all government institutions to take measures under the Law on the GAP BiH. In order to fulfil these obligations, institutions must develop and implement active public policies and strategic measures in order to eliminate inequalities and achieve gender equality in all spheres of life. The inclusion of standards and principles of gender equality in all areas of social life (“gender mainstreaming”) is the obligation of gender equality institutions, but also of all competent institutions that have an obligation to introduce and apply these standards in their scope of work.

BiH’s priorities for gender equality are set out in the GAP BiH. Its Strategic Objective 1 defines the obligations of competent state institutions in priority areas in accordance with the LGE and international documents for gender equality. They list the measures that the competent authorities have an obligation to take during the implementation period of the GAP BiH. The deadlines, as well as the bearers of activities, will be determined by annual operational plans, which will be defined in accordance with the competences of the institutions prescribed by the relevant legal framework. Priorities in the period until the end of 2027 are as follows:

- Preventing and combating gender-based violence, including domestic violence as well as human trafficking
- Public and political life and decision-making
- Work, employment and access to economic resources
- Education, science, culture and sports
- Health, prevention and protection
- Social Protection.
- Gender and security
- Gender equality in the context of environmental protection and climate change

In addition, in order for BiH to fulfil its obligation to eliminate gender discrimination and achieve gender equality, there is a need to continue working on the establishment or strengthening of systems, mechanisms and instruments for achieving gender equality. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary that institutional mechanisms at all levels of legislative and executive power act proactively, ensuring the necessary financial and human resources, and that their action is fully supported by political authorities at all levels. Strengthening the capacity and coordination of the work of institutional mechanisms for gender equality is one of the important prerequisites for the effective implementation of the GAP BiH at all levels of government. The AGE BiH, MHRR BiH and the GC RS and GC FBiH are key institutional mechanisms for gender equality, which are in charge of directing efforts to combat discrimination and achieve gender equality through the development of strategic documents and action plans.



The network of institutional mechanisms for gender issues at all levels of legislative and executive power in BiH is constantly expanding - through initiatives and the establishment of gender equality commissions at the local level, as well as the appointment of contact persons for gender issues within institutions at all levels of government in BiH. However, there is still a lack of human resources, as well as budgetary resources for the functioning of the AGE BiH, the MHRR BiH, GC FBiH and GC RS, in order to continue improving their work, especially due to the continuous increase in the volume of work. This shortcoming has been overcome by a proactive common approach to international donors providing support to strengthen the human, professional and financial capacities of all three institutions.

Finally, BiH remains committed to implementing all obligations and in particular those of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women UN Security Council Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security”, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. In addition, BiH, which has the status of a candidate country for accession to the European Union, will continue to align state and entity regulations with EU law and these reform processes are expected to present a new opportunity for gender mainstreaming efforts.