



2008 Annual Report of the United Women Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Contact Information:

United Women Banja Luka

Address: Kalemegdanska 18, 78000 Banja Luka
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Telephone/fax: +387 51 463 143

Telephone: +387 51 462 146

E-mail: office@unitedwomenbl.org

Web: <http://www.unitedwomenbl.org>

1. Preface

It is our pleasure to present you the annual report of “United Women” Banja Luka for 2008. During this period, focus of our work remained on promotion and protection of women’s human rights and gender equality in all fields of public and private life.

Despite challenging political, economic, and social environment that continue to marginalize women’s issues and priorities, “United Women” Banja Luka succeeded to reach important results in fields of protecting women from all forms of violence, promoting women’s participation in political decision making, and enhancing sensibility of electronic and printed media in BiH for gender equality issues.

“United Women” Banja Luka continued to provide direct services for women and children victims of violence through legal aid, counseling, and SOS telephone for women survivors of domestic violence. The Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Banja Luka run by our Association contributed with providing shelter for 34 women and 36 children survivors of domestic violence in Banja Luka region, which represents almost 50% increase comparing to 2007.

Quality of assistance to women and children improved thanks to the participation of “United Women” Banja Luka staff members in the work of the Multi-Disciplinary Mobile Team for Assistance and Support for Victims of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka. We participated in 234 field interventions in Banja Luka wide region, and extended cooperation with Center for Public Security and Center for Social Work in Banja Luka, BiH.

In 2008, “United Women” Banja Luka team focused on monitoring legislative and policy developments in gender equality of BiH, and contributed in some important changes in this field. Our key focus was on the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and Law on Social Protection of Republika Srpska, in which we advocated for improved state response in protection women and children victims of violence. We initiated important pilot project aimed to advocate for gender responsive budgeting in the area of fighting domestic violence against women, which contributed to introducing important changes in financing women’s shelters from the public budgets on local and entity levels of Republika Srpska. These activities will continue in 2009 as well.

“United Women” Banja Luka is proud on successful cooperation with partner women’s nongovernmental organizations, women politicians, media throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region, which significantly improved during 2008. Together we implemented two countrywide campaigns aimed to improve public and media visibility of female candidates on the local elections in BiH, and increase public awareness about gender based violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Cooperation with the institutional mechanisms for gender equality in BiH also improved through participation of “United Women” Banja Luka staff members in multi- disciplinary working groups aimed to develop BiH Strategy for Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence and changes and amendments of the Law on Gender Equality in BiH.

We are remaining committed to work on enhancing professional capacities and expertise of our staff and members, in order to improve our actions on promotion and protection of women’s human rights and gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.

“United Women” Banja Luka is using the opportunity to express gratitude for outstanding support of all our donors, partner organizations and institutions, as well as women and men citizens of Banja Luka and other cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in which we implemented our activities that are subject of this Report.

Nada Golubovic
Executive Director
“United Women” Banja Luka

2. About “United Women” Banja Luka

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

Our vision is "Woman aware of her power, equal, respected, employed, and happy."

Our mission is "Strengthening and affirmation of women through advocacy and work on implementation of women's human rights."

Program Areas and Strategic Priorities of “United Women” Banja Luka:

A. Advocacy Against Violence Against Women and Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Strategic Objectives: Ensuring efficient legal counseling and services for women and children victims of domestic violence, improving cooperation and coordination of NGOs and official institutions in fighting against violence against women, public advocacy for introducing gender sensitive and responsive budgeting in the area of fighting domestic violence against women, strengthening public awareness about gender based violence, monitoring implementation of domestic laws and international conventions and documents aimed to protect women from violence, as well as making influence on positive changes of discriminative laws and public policies in this area.

B. Media and Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Strategic Objectives: Diminishing gender stereotypes in media, making influence on positive changes of media policies and programs to increase visibility and improve portrayal of women and women's issues in media, strengthening implementation of international conventions and documents aimed to improve gender equality in BiH media, gender sensitive education of women and men media professionals, creating possibilities for eliminating gender based discrimination in all fields of social economic, and political life through increasing public awareness about existence of Gender Equality Law in BiH, developing informed public opinion about gender based discrimination, and encouraging active participation of women and men citizens in actions aimed for improving women's position in our environment.

C. Gender Equality in Public and Political Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Strategic Objectives: Empowering women to participate in political and social changes through their active role in creation of public policies and political decision making on local, entity, and state levels of Bosnia and Herzegovina, strengthening implementation of domestic laws and international conventions and documents aimed for ensure equality of women and men in public and political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and making influence on positive changes of discriminative laws and public policies in this area.

D. Advocacy Against Trafficking of People in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Strategic Objectives: Increasing public awareness about the issue of trafficking of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially women and children, as the most vulnerable categories exposed to influence of criminal networks of human traffickers in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region, strengthening networking and common actions of women's NGOs in BiH aimed to combat trafficking of women, and public advocacy for strengthening implementation of domestic laws and international conventions and documents in the area of combating trafficking of women.

3. Analysis of the Environment in which we Implemented Our Activities in 2008

3.1 Changes in Institutional Framework, Actions and Policies for Improving Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina

3.1.1 Actions in the Field of Prevention and Combating Violence against Women

Progress was made in work of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality on the state and entity level of Bosnia and Herzegovina in setting up the policy framework and actions aimed for prevention and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

- At the end of January 2008, Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the **Resolution about Fighting Violence against Women in a Family**.¹ The Resolution was adopted as response to the Regional Campaign "**Parliamentarians United in Combating Domestic Violence against Women**" initiated by the Council of Europe with the Resolution No. 1512, adopted in 2006. The Resolution of BiH Parliament calls Council of Ministers of BiH to adopt appropriate laws and budgetary measures, as well as public policies aimed to stop violence against women, to ensure effective implementation of existing laws in the practice, especially to enforce measures to protect victims, and continuous training of medical professionals, police, judiciary, and social service workers.

The Resolution also recognizes that continuous monitoring of the work of official institutions on prevention of violence against women and domestic violence is needed, as well as preparing regular reports about progress and measures taken in this field, and submitting these reports to the Council of Europe.

- Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and Agency for Gender Equality of BiH initiated preparation of the **BiH State Strategy for Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence**, through creation of the Multidisciplinary Working Group with participation of women and men public officials and representatives of civil society. Two female representatives of nongovernmental organizations that are working on women's human rights and gender equality were Natalija Petric, Legal Advisor of United Women Banja Luka and Jasmina Mujezinovic, Director of the Foundation for Local Democracy Sarajevo. Ms. Petric contributed to the work of this Group through providing legal expertise and NGO experience in working on the issues of violence against women and domestic violence. Furthermore, she had the opportunity to participate in development of the Strategy in part related to work of shelters for women and children victims of domestic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- The BiH Strategy for Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence covers the period 2008 -2010, and focuses on following measures:

- a). Prevention of violence through work with media and official institutions,
- b). Reform of curricula and training of professional staff in official institutions,
- c). Measures related to treatment of violence,
- d). Measures related to providing assistance for victims of violence,
- e). Measures related to work with abusers – developing model of psychosocial treatment of abusers,
- f). Improving data bases and statistical information about violence against women,
- g). Conducting continuous researches about possibilities for protection of rights and offering support for victims and witnesses of domestic violence.

- In January 2008, People's Assembly of Republika Srpska adopted the **Law on Changes and Amendments of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of RS**, and introduced two important changes. Domestic violence was recognized as severe violation of human rights of women and children, and safe houses for women and children victims of violence are to be financially supported through the public budgets of the entity and local communities, in ratio 70:30. The decision related to the financing of the safe houses in RS has been respected in the public budget planning process for 2009 by the Ministry of Finance of RS Government, and City Administration Banja Luka, in relation to the Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Banja Luka, managed by the United Women Banja Luka.

Together with partner women's NGOs in BiH, "United Women" Banja Luka influenced this process through developing amendments on the Law, and lobbying women parliamentarians to support it. This process also contributed to increasing public awareness about domestic violence against women, and increased media focus and coverage of the issue of gender based violence in BiH.

- In May 2008, Commission for Equal Opportunities of the People's Assembly of RS and Gender Center of RS Government organized Thematic Session with title "**Implementation of the Action Plan for Fighting Domestic Violence in 2007 and 2008 in Republika Srpska**." Objective of the Session was for representatives of the official institutions to present current results and planned activities in the implementation of the Action Plan. Progress has been recognized in terms of securing legislative conditions for public budget support for shelters for women and children victims of violence in RS. Gender Center of RS Government emphasized issue of lack of standardized data collection about cases of domestic violence and level of support for victims of violence

¹ Complete text of the Resolution on Combating Domestic Violence Against Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be downloaded at Council of Europe web page, at following link: http://www.coe.int/t/p/pace/campaign/stopviolence/Source/bih_resolution_jan2008_en.pdf

among official institutions involved in work on domestic violence, namely police, centers for social work, judicial institutions, and health institutions.

- In 2008, Ministry of Health and Social Care of Republika Srpska initiated work on preparing **Guidelines and Protocol for Working with Victims of Domestic Violence** – two separate procedures and guidelines were developed for centers for social work and health institutions. As a part of this process, common questionnaire was developed in order to enhance and systematize data collection about victims and abusers in cases of domestic violence. Starting in June 2008, workshops for women and men employees of the centers for social work and health care institutions were organized by the Ministry, in order to introduce new regulations in the practice. Continuous issue represents the fact that women victims of violence still need to pay for injury list, or medical record as only relevant evidence for court that violence actually happened. Some local communities cover these costs from public budgets through local centers of social work, but this is still not consistent practice.

- In June 2008, Government of Republika Srpska announced **2008 and 2009 as Years of Fighting against Domestic Violence in Republika Srpska**. Extensive media campaign with title **“Family Without Violence”** has been initiated in order to influence on increase of public awareness about domestic violence as social issue, improve institutional response on domestic violence, and create a climate of zero tolerance on domestic violence in Republika Srpska. Promotional materials targeting different audience will be developed and distributed throughout Republika Srpska to municipalities, public institutions, schools, and nongovernmental organizations.

- On 55th Session held on 14 May 2008, Government of FBiH adopted decision to allocate 200.000 BAM from the **public budget for supporting implementation of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in FBiH**. In accordance to the program of Gender Center of FBiH Government, financial support was allocated to local NGOs in Federation of BiH that are working with victims of domestic violence. However, regardless of this progress, Federation of BiH still lacks systemic solution for supporting the safe houses for victims of domestic violence in Federation of BiH from the public budgets.

- In 2008, Gender Center of Federation of BiH prepared **changes and amendments of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in FBiH**, as well as **Strategic Plan for Combating Domestic Violence in FBiH**. The Government of FBiH adopted the Strategic Plan at the 77th session held on 13 November 2008.² It represents operational document and working framework for all public institutions responsible for preventive work in the area of domestic violence, and especially in education, health, social protection, security, and justice system in Federation of BiH. Emphasis of the Strategic Plan are on developing necessary training programs for women and men professionals that are working on prevention of domestic violence. Long-term strategic objective in prevention of domestic violence is to ensure harmonized and appropriate prevention activities of public institutions at all levels of governance and nongovernmental organizations in Federation of BiH. The Strategic Plan includes six key objectives, as follows: adoption of legislation, networking of professional services, education, and increasing sensibility of the professionals and wide public, multi-disciplinary model in prevention and protection from violence, and establishing joint database and SOS telephone line for assisting victims of violence.

- On 4 December 2008 in Sarajevo, Gender Center of FBiH Government signed Memorandum of Understanding with nongovernmental organizations “Women from Una” Bihać, “Woman BiH” Mostar, “Medica” Zenica, “Vive Žene” Tuzla and “Foundation of Local Democracy” Sarajevo, as well as the Center for Social Work of Jajce. The Memorandum aims to establish joint SOS telephone operating 24/7 at short number 1265. Members of the listed NGOs and professionals of the Center for Social Work Jajce will continuously provide counseling and assistance to victims of violence who call the short line.

3.1.2 Preparing Changes and Amendments of the Gender Equality Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Adoption of Anti-Discrimination Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina

- In 2008, representatives of the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH and Gender Centers of Governments of RS and FBiH initiated activities on preparing **changes and amendments of the Gender Equality Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina**, aimed to overcome identified obstacles for implementation of this Law in the practice. Agency for Gender Equality of BiH created the Working Group consisting of mainly from representatives of the official institutions to conduct comprehensive analysis of the Law, and prepare changes and amendments of the Law that would strengthen it in all aspects, not just in the field of judicial protection. In December 2008, Natalija Petric, Legal Advisor of United Women Banja Luka was appointed as the only representative of civil society organizations in BiH, to contribute with her expertise in preparing changes and amendments. She used the opportunity to advocate for integrating proposals of women’s NGOs related to

² The Strategic Plan for Prevention of Domestic Violence in Federation of BiH 2009-2010 (on local language) can be downloaded from the following link: http://www.fgenderc.com.ba/bh/strateski_plan/strateski_plan_bos.pdf

ensuring equal representation of women in political decision making at all levels of governance, as well as strengthening measures related to fighting gender based violence and judicial protection, as regulated by this Law.

- The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH prepared the **Draft Anti-Discrimination Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina**. The Draft Law aims to ensure protection of rights regulated by BiH and entity Constitutions, Statute of Brcko District, existing laws in force in BiH, as well as rights recognized by the European Human Rights Convention and other international conventions ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina. Refugees and displaced persons, and other vulnerable categories such as civil victims of war, victims in criminal proceedings, persons with invalidity, representatives of minorities, women, children, aged persons, are recognized as specially protected categories. For these categories, authorities in BiH are obliged to ensure equal access and equality in enjoying their rights, through adoption of laws and developing and implementation of special protection programs. The Draft Law also recognizes Ombudsman of BiH as the key institution with authority to prevent and suppress discrimination in BiH.³ In the moment of preparing this Report, the Anti-Discrimination Law of BiH still did not reach the official adoption procedure in front of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3.1.3 First Official Reports on Status of Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina Prepared by the Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Equality

- **Gradual progress has been made in terms of monitoring and reporting on gender equality issues by official authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.** By the Gender Equality Law of BiH, monitoring and supervision over implementation of Gender Equality Law in BiH has been given primarily to the entity Gender Centers, which are obliged to produce annual and special reports about implementation of the Law, and submit them to the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH. The Law also regulates that these reports should be published. Furthermore, the Law urges for harmonization of other legislation with Gender Equality Law in BiH, within six months of their adoption.⁴ So far, none of these authorities was consistently applied – first reports on implementation of Gender Equality Law in BiH have been prepared by entity Gender Centers in early 2008 for the period of 2007.

These reports rather focus on activities of these institutional mechanisms than providing information on status and progress in reaching equality of women and men in specific fields as regulated by the Law. In the process of preparing these reports, selected women's NGOs throughout BiH have been contacted by entity Gender Centers with request to submit information about their activities on implementation of Gender Equality Law in BiH. Transparency of these reports to the wide public is also limited – so far, only Gender Center of Federation of BiH has posted their Report on Implementation of Gender Equality Law in BiH for the area of Federation of BiH on their web page.⁵ Agency for Gender Equality of BiH and Gender Center of Republika Srpska only presented key excerpts related to implementation of Gender Equality Law in BiH at the Press Conference held in Sarajevo at 5 March 2008, and only press statement is available to the wide public at web page of the Agency.⁶ To our knowledge, no special reports on implementation of the Law have been prepared so far and submitted to the Council of Ministers of BiH.

3.2 Changes in Political Environment and Women's Representation in Political Decision- Making in Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Actions and work of official authorities and institutions at all levels of Bosnia and Herzegovina reflect slow positive changes in terms of overcoming gender based stereotypes and discriminatory attitude toward participation of women in public and political life and decision making. Analysis of the overall work of official institutions at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that activities on gender mainstreaming are almost entirely placed within responsibility of the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH and Gender Centers of Republika Srpska and Federation of BiH. Other institutions do not feel responsible for implementation of gender sensitive legislation, namely Gender Equality Law in BiH.

- Despite public protests and pressure of United Women Banja Luka and women's NGOs throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central Election Commission of BiH again neglected their obligation to harmonize the Election Law of BiH with the Article 15 of Law on Gender Equality of BiH and comply with Recommendations

³ The Draft Anti-Discrimination Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina (on local language) can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/PDF/LjudskaPrava/ZakonOZabraniDiskriminacijaNacrt.pdf>

⁴ Article 24 of the Gender Equality Law of BiH

⁵ See: http://www.fgenderc.com.ba/bh/godisnji_izvjestaji/lzvjescje_o_provedbi_ZORSuBiH_za_2007.pdf and http://www.fgenderc.com.ba/bh/godisnji_izvjestaji/prilozi.pdf

⁶ See: <http://www.arsbih.gov.ba/download.aspx?id=658> and <http://www.arsbih.gov.ba/download.aspx?id=659>

of the UN CEDAW Committee in this regard. In response to our protest letter, representative of the Central Election Commission of BiH stated this institution is not responsible for implementation of Law on Gender Equality of BiH, and that "Gender Equality Law of BiH presupposes representation of both sexes equally, but not the equal number of representatives of both sexes in governance institutions at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina."⁷

- United Women Banja Luka still did not receive any response on our petition to the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which we submitted in March 2007 against the Central Election Commission. The petition relates to violation of Law on Gender Equality of BiH in case of approving candidates for Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This state level executive governance body of BiH still has all male members.

- Marginalization of women and diminishing importance of gender equality in all fields of economic, social, and political life continued to be highly visible, despite continuous pressure of local NGOs to put these issues on social and political agendas. BiH Human Rights Situation Report for 2007 released by the Helsinki Committee For Human Rights in BiH at beginning of 2008 express open criticism toward the activities of the official institutions at all levels in BiH aimed to prevent gender based discrimination and ensuring equality of women and men in both private and public sphere. The Report states that women are seriously underrepresented in political life and decision-making, and do not participate in economic and political reforms. In relation to men, women have limited access to the labor market - 34,9% of women is unemployed, and more than 60% of women is not covered with health insurance. The Report emphasizes extremely difficult position of Roma women in Bosnia and Herzegovina – 90% of them do not have any access to health protection, social care, and employment, and states that similar situation is in regard to women living in rural areas of BiH. The Report also states there are no measures and plans on the level of the state of BiH, entities, and Brcko District that would address these issues, as there are no programs for encouraging employment of women.⁸

- On 5 November 2008, the European Commission released the Progress Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period from 1 October 2007 to 1 October 2008. The Commission's services presented monitoring and assessment results of the achievements of BiH as the potential candidate for the EU membership. Contrary to the previous EC Progress Report for BiH, which lacked information and conclusions related to the status of women's human rights and gender equality, 2008 Report for BiH integrates these issues in more consistent manner. This can be seen as result of the pressure of several civil society groups in BiH, including "United Women" Banja Luka, which criticized the European Commission for lack of efforts to record and analyze gender equality and women's rights issues.

- The Commission recognized overall framework for women's human rights as satisfactory, but without progress in effective implementation of existing policies and laws in the practice. In the section related to the situation of prison systems, the European Commission identified need for addressing lack of special correctional reform institutions for women, juveniles, persons with mental health problems, persons with disabilities and seniors. The Report emphasizes existence of structures to support gender equality, and identifies need for making their mandates more specific, as well as increase of financial and human resources to ensure that these structures are functioning properly. The need for clear priorities in effective implementation of BiH Gender Action Plan has been identified as well.

- In relation to anti-discrimination policies, the Report especially focuses on widespread social discrimination and exclusion of LGBT⁹ community. It concludes, "Introduction and implementation of legal provisions to prevent discrimination and protect rights of women, children, disabled and socially vulnerable persons, as well as LGBT people has been poor overall." In the area of equal opportunities, EC Progress Report for BiH in 2008 identifies that no serious measures have been undertaken to address the issues related to women's access to labor market. As consequence of that, gender based discrimination of workers remains widespread, women continue to be underrepresented in political life and their salaries remain significantly lower than those of men.¹⁰

⁷ Dr. Suad Arnautovic, President of the Central Election Commission of BiH in letter of response on public appeal of United Women Banja Luka and Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka in relation to harmonization of Election Law of BiH with Gender Equality Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 05-1-02-3-572/08, Sarajevo, 31 March 2008

⁸ The Report About Situation of Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Analysis for the Period from 1 January 2007 until 31 December 2007), No. 02-02/2008, Helsinki Committee For Human Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Available at web:

<http://www.bh-hchr.org/lzvjestaji/lzvjestaji%20o%20stanju%20ljudskih%20prava%20za%202007.doc>,

Local language Version (Accessed on 19 February 2008)

⁹ LGBT refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

¹⁰ 2008 Progress Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina prepared by the European Commission can be accessed at the following link:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2008_en.htm

- In the process of preparation for the local elections held on 5 October 2008 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, "United Women" Banja Luka joined women's NGOs throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina in open call to all political parties to provide equal opportunities for women candidates for municipal councils when developing lists of candidates. "United Women" Banja Luka emphasized that, in order to reach European standards and principles integrated into the Law on Gender Equality of BiH, political parties need to ensure equal treatment of women and men members of their political parties when developing lists of candidates. We called political parties to use alternate distribution of candidates (one man one woman, etc.) on the election lists. United Women Banja Luka expressed opinion this will enable greater number of elected women in municipal councils, and create preconditions for common responsibility of women and men for sustainable and humane development of local communities and more equal participation of women and man in decision making processes on local level.

Key Statistics - Local Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina – October 2008

Sex	Total Candidates for Municipal/City Majors		Total Candidates for Delegates in the Local Assemblies		Total Candidates for Delegates Representatives of the National Minorities		Total Voters	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
F	36	6%	10.189	36%	20	19%	1.513.836	50%
M	530	94%	18.182	64%	86	81%	1.510.291	50%
Total	566	100%	28.371	100%	106	100%	3.024.127	100%

There were only 36 (or 6%) of female candidates for municipal/city majors, and 10189 (or 36%) of female candidates for delegates of municipal/city councils in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, there were 21 (or 20%) of female candidates for delegates in municipal/city councils representing national minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Women made 50% of registered voters for the 2008 local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Official results of the local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2008 show that female candidates won 14.5% of the total seats in the local councils/assemblies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, we should note that none of the female candidates won seats in local councils/assemblies in eight municipalities, which are predominantly in Western Bosnia and Herzegovina regions. The surprise certainly represents Municipality of Kupres where women won more than half of the seats in the local council.

Out of 140 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, women won 4 (four) positions of municipality/city majors – in municipalities of Novi Grad, Oštra Luka, East Drvar and Kalinovik. All of the elected women majors were candidates of the Union of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), the political party that won the highest number of delegates on the local elections in BiH. All four mentioned municipalities fit in the range of middle developed or underdeveloped local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which places additional challenges for newly elected women majors. However, in case of Oštra Luka, newly elected major, Ms. Drena Kulidža won her third mandate, which speaks in favor of her success in leading role in development of this local community.¹¹

- Women continue to be invisible in political negotiations about important issues that affect lives of both women and men - for example, the constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Male political leaders of key parliamentary political parties are finishing all negotiations about important political topics in their narrow circles, and the international community supports this model. The main argument of male politicians for lack of female representatives in political negotiations and decision-making is that there are no many women professionals with knowledge of politics and economy that would give creative and useful contribution to solving political and economic crisis in the country. Male political elites are still not ready to leave more space for women in political decision-making, and majority of male politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina believe women should fight for their space in political and social life alone. These arguments reflect lack of awareness

¹¹ Analyzed the official results of the local elections in 2008 in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on data provided by the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina web page at www.izbori.ba

about equal responsibility of both women and men for reaching gender equality in political and public life, and necessity for promotion of active role of both sexes in gender mainstreaming.

3.3 Changes in Media Focus on Women's Issues and Gender Equality

- "United Women" Banja Luka continuously monitors media and their reporting about women's issues and gender equality. During 2008, we noticed general progress in number of reports about women and gender equality, especially increased number of articles in printed media and TV reports in relation to the issues of violence against women, and lack of women in public and political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- There is visible progress in terms of usage of gender sensitive language by media, especially the public broadcasters. However, it is still noticeable news stories with women and gender equality issues as subjects are dominant in so called "dark chronicles," - mostly cases of severe violence against women and domestic violence. In case of electronic media, discrimination and abuse of women is still visible, although there are positive examples of supporting prevention of domestic violence through frequent broadcasting stories about multi-disciplinary mobile team for field interventions in cases of domestic violence in Banja Luka.

- Positive example represents work of "BiH Dani" a popular weekly political magazine from Sarajevo that has distribution network throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their articles and reports on gender equality topics, e.g. sexual harassment at BiH universities, discrimination of sexual minorities, gender discrimination in health system, trafficking of young women within Bosnia and Herzegovina, are examples of usage of analytic and investigative journalism, challenging gender stereotypes and media advocacy against gender based discrimination.

- When presenting the Annual report on implementation of Gender Equality Law of BiH in 2007, representative of the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH emphasized that media in BiH represent important partner to official institutions and civil society organizations when it comes to promotion of principles of equality of women and men. However, she also emphasized that some printed media in BiH are lately using misogynic attitudes and language, which is inexcusable, as media should encourage women to take power and decision making positions in media and public life, and not discouraging them with their media policies and actions.¹²

- "United Women" Banja Luka and our partners, women's NGOs throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to struggle to challenge media stereotypes, and influence on positive changes in media policies of reporting about women's human rights and gender equality. Positive example represents the initiative of Radio Television of Republika Srpska (RTRS) as the entity public broadcaster, to increase focus on women's human rights and gender equality issues during the Campaign 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in BiH implemented in 2008. This was done through collaborative approach with women's NGOs and women politicians throughout BiH. Activities of RTRS during the Campaign were included in the BiH Calendar of Activities prepared by "United Women" Banja Luka, and posted on the web page of Center for Global Women's Leadership, as the part of the International Calendar for 16 Days Campaign.

4. Activities and Projects of "United Women" Banja Luka in 2008

Activities of United Women Banja Luka in 2008 were directly linked to the four program areas and strategic objectives the Association.

A. Advocacy Against Violence Against Women and Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Key Laws, Public Policies, and International Documents in this Area:

- Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by Parliamentary Assembly of BiH in June 2003;
- Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by Council of Ministers of BiH in September 2006;
- Criminal Law of Republika Srpska adopted by People's Assembly of RS in 2003;

¹² Samra Filipović Hadžić, Director of the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH, presentation at the press conference on the occasion of 8 March 2008, Sarajevo

- Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in RS, adopted by People's Assembly of RS in December 2005, and Law on Changes and Amendments of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in RS from January 2008;
- Action Plan for Fighting Domestic Violence in RS 2007-2008, adopted by Government of RS in April 2007;
- Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by United Nations in 1979, and succeeded by Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 1993;
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (China) in September 1995, and signed by Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by General Assembly of UN in December 1993;
- Declarations, recommendations, and resolutions on the level of Council of Europe and European Union that address violence against women.

***Naglasiti sivo oznaceni tekst u odvojenom boxu**

A.1 Woman and Law - Phase 12 - 2008 Providing Free Legal and Psychosocial Assistance for Women Victims of Violence

“United Women” Banja Luka and “Helsinki Citizens Assembly” Banja Luka are implementing this project since 1997, thanks to the support from Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation from Sweden.

Activities in 2008: providing free legal advices, assistance, and information for women victims of violence, SOS telephone for women and girls victims of violence, monitoring development and implementation of BiH laws and policies in the area of violence against women and domestic violence, workshops on multi-disciplinary approach in prevention and treatment of domestic violence for women and men representatives of local official institutions and NGOs in Mrkonjic Grad, Pale, Trebinje and Prijedor, preparing resource material on domestic violence, networking meetings, and planning and implementation of joint public advocacy and lobbying actions in cooperation with other women's nongovernmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Accomplished Results:

- Long term and continuous services for women in need and public advocacy for eliminating all forms of violence against women contributed to increasing public visibility of violence against women in our environment, and demystifying the socially constructed prejudices about social roles and responsibilities of a woman. Domestic violence is increasingly recognized as a social and public issue that requires coordinated action of all actors from the level of local community to the state level – primarily that the state through work of official institutions at all levels have obligation to protect a woman from violence and intervene in a private sphere of a family. United Women Banja Luka believe this represents important positive step toward change of public perception of fighting violence against women as one of the key precondition for social progress and reaching equality between women and men.

- Provided free legal advice and information for 244 women, and provided legal assistance for 63 women victims of violence from Banja Luka and surrounding region. SOS telephone for women and girls victims of violence received 668 calls for assistance, predominantly from women victims of violence. Women beneficiaries shared with us that provided free legal assistance and advices helped them to not only increase their legal security, but also acquire information about their rights and positive laws in BiH, and raise their self-confidence and readiness to fight their problems. Decrease (24,61%) of SOS calls received by United Women Banja Luka in relation to whole period of 2007 can be also seen as result of lack of trust of women victims of violence in work of official institutions, and confidence they would be protected by their intervention. This continuously emerge as the issue among our women beneficiaries, as they share with us their frustration of slow systemic solutions, and keeping the side of abuser and justifying his behavior by representatives of official institutions.

- Through providing legal assistance to women victims of violence, Woman and Law project staff was able to identify challenges and obstacles in implementation of laws, namely the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in RS, and based on that to develop proposals for changes and amendments of the Law. In January 2008, People's Assembly of RS adopted the changes and amendments of the Law. These changes recognized

domestic violence as “severe violation of human rights of women and children,” and introduced obligation of public budget planning for financial support for the safe houses for women and children victims of violence in RS, in ratio of 70% from the entity budget and 30% from the budget of local communities.

Through activities of the Safe House Banja Luka during 2008, we contributed in successful implementation of the special protection measure of sheltering victims of violence, and providing them urgent assistance and care.

- Participation of Woman and Law representative in the Working Group for preparing BiH Strategy for Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence and Working Group for preparing Law on Changes and Amendments of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH enabled us to make direct comments and proposals, and influence specific parts of the Strategy and Draft Law with our experiences, and experiences of other sister women’s NGOs that are working on the issue of violence against women.

- Sixty nine (69) women and men representatives of police, centers for social work, local nongovernmental organizations and public administrations from Banja Luka, Mrkonjić Grad, Sipovo, Jezero, Ribnik, Rudo, Rogatica, Čajniče, Višegrad, Novo Goražde, Kalinovik, East Sarajevo, Pale, Sokolac, Han Pjesak, Trebinje, Gacko, Nevesinje, Berkovići, Ljubinje, Bileća, Prijedor, Novi Grad, Kozarac, Ljubija, Kozarska Dubica, and Kostajnica actively participated on four one-day workshops on multi-disciplinary approach in prevention and treatment of domestic violence. They enhanced awareness, sensitivity, and knowledge on domestic violence against women, and learned about the work of Mobile Team for Assistance and Support for Victims of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka. As result of the workshops, specific recommendations were defined and they emphasize need for more coherent and coordinated work of local official institutions, continuous education, and increasing sensibility of women and men professionals for issues of violence against women and domestic violence, and cooperation with local NGOs in providing assistance for women victims of violence.

- Improved cooperation with City Administration of Banja Luka, Center for Public Security Banja Luka, Center for Social Work Banja Luka and Medical Center Banja Luka, thanks to continuous and long-term lobbying, communication, and work on awareness rising and education of official institutions with responsibility to work on domestic violence on the level of our local community. In 2008, we continued with implementation of the *Protocol About Actions of Team for Assistance and Support for Victims of Domestic Violence*, and activities of the *Mobile Team for Assistance and Support for Victims of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka region*.

A.2 Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Domestic Violence from the Banja Luka Region¹³

Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Domestic Violence in region of Banja Luka was founded on the initiative of NGO “United Women” Banja Luka, and was opened for the first beneficiaries on 12 February 2007, when all working conditions were met, and initial financing of the Safe House was secured. On 14 March 2007, Safe House Banja Luka received Decision of Department for Social Affairs of City Administration Banja Luka that confirmed fulfillment of conditions related to premises, equipment, and professional staff for opening and work of the Safe House, with written approval of the Ministry of Health and Social Care of Republika Srpska.

In the period from 1 January 2008 until 31 December 2008, seventy (70) persons were sheltered in the Safe House Banja Luka – thirty four (34) women and thirty six (36) children. The number of women and children beneficiaries of the Safe House Banja Luka shows tendency of increasing for almost 50% in relation to the same period in 2007. This increase is largely result of change in a way of financing running costs of the safe houses in Republika Srpska, which released burden from the local communities from which women and children beneficiaries were coming from.

Beside beneficiaries of the Safe House from Banja Luka area, we sheltered women and children victims of violence from the area of Laktaši, Kotor Varoš, Gradiška, Knežev, Zvornik, Čelinac, Srbac, Ribnik, Mrkonjić Grad, and a woman from Subotica, with citizenship of Republic of Serbia. One underage girl, victim of trafficking, was sheltered in the Safe House Banja Luka for a short period in 2008, in cooperation with police and public prosecutor’s office.

In majority of cases, women were exposed to violence by their spouses and common law partners. In two cases, women were victims of violence committed by their sons. In a case of victim of trafficking, other, unknown people exposed a girl to violence and different forms of abuse.

¹³ Detailed report about work of the Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka for 2008 is available at following link: http://www.unitedwomenbl.org/docs/Annual_Report_Safe_House_2008.pdf

The largest percentage of women (55%) were victims of long-term violence and abuse, within a period longer than 10 years, while 30% of women beneficiaries were exposed to violence during a period of several months. Based on previous experiences, it can be noticed that younger women are more likely to report violence within a short period after it occurred, as result of increased public awareness about this issue. Contrary to that, middle age women and older women are reporting violence after they exhausted all other methods to stop it. In 35% of cases, women beneficiaries of the Safe House Banja Luka were reporting violence after a few months of suffering violent torture by their abusers.

Period of stay of women beneficiaries of the Safe House Banja Luka was from one day up to three months, depending on identifying adequate solution for women beneficiaries. Women that decided to return to the abuser or to a family where violence occurred were leaving the Safe House after one to two weeks of staying in the shelter. Certain number of women was staying in the shelter for longer period, and upon leaving the Safe House, they started new life with their children. Fifteen (15) women beneficiaries were staying in the shelter for a period of two weeks. Eight (8) women were staying for the period between 15 to 45 days, while twelve (12) women beneficiaries were staying in the Safe House for the period of three months. In two cases, women beneficiaries extended their stay in the shelter after three months period, due to complicated personal security situation and lack of possibility for finding any solution.

Women beneficiaries of the Safe House Banja Luka during 2008 were between 16 and 75 years of age. The largest percentage of women (30%) fitted under age group of 30 to 39 years of age. 55% of women beneficiaries have high school education, while 30% of women beneficiaries have only elementary school level education. Two women beneficiaries did not have any formal education, while one woman beneficiary had lower level of university education.

Out of total number of women beneficiaries in 2008, twenty six (26) women were unemployed, while six (6) women beneficiaries had regular monthly income on some basis. During accommodation in the Safe House, two (2) women beneficiaries lost their jobs. Ten (10) women beneficiaries of the Safe House Banja Luka were sheltered together with their two children, while seven (7) women beneficiaries stayed in the Safe House together with one child. Fourteen (14) women beneficiaries were sheltered without children, as due to direct life threats they were forced to leave children with abuser. Largest number of children (11) sheltered in the Safe House was from 14 to 18 years of age, while ten children were from 8 to 13 years of age. Two babies less than a year old were also sheltered in the Safe House together with their mothers, and due to that we needed to purchase special equipment.

Twenty seven (27) women beneficiaries in 2008 did not have visible injuries that required medical assistance. In two cases, women beneficiaries had heavy physical injuries. Other women beneficiaries that required medical care had light physical injuries in a form of bruises and contusions. Majority of women beneficiaries did not have their own housing, and abusers were staying in the common property. Support from the family members consisted of psychosocial support, while any other assistance was not possible. This was influencing status quo in position of women victims. Because of that, it was difficult to identify an exit strategy, especially in situations when women beneficiaries were staying in the Safe House only for a short period.

When searching for exit strategies for women beneficiaries, Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence run by United Women Banja Luka was supported by some private entrepreneurs, but these were unfortunately rare situations. During the first year of work of the Safe House Banja Luka, we established cooperation with Employment Agency SPEKTAR from Banja Luka. However, weak results in finding employment for women beneficiaries were influenced by small offer of available jobs at the employment market and high demand for qualified workers with higher level of education. Twenty-six (26) women beneficiaries that were sheltered in the Safe House during 2008 were unemployed, and for nine (9) women we succeeded to find some kind of jobs during their stay in the shelter, or upon their leave from the Safe House. In cooperation with Humanitarian Association "Partner" Banja Luka, three (3) women beneficiaries of the Safe House find jobs of home assistants. "Partner" also assisted us to find job for a son of a woman beneficiary of the Safe House, after they left the Safe House. Based on previous cooperation with Shoe Factory "BEMA", we succeeded to find employment for three women beneficiaries – two women were employed in direct production, while one woman beneficiary got a job with higher level of education, based on her previous experience in this filed.

A.3 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2008

With support of Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED) from Germany, United Women Banja Luka was able to enhance resources, coordination, and cooperation with other women's NGOs, women in media, and women politicians throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina on implementation of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in BiH. On 3 and 4 November 2008, working meeting was held in Banja Luka aimed to plan strategy, messages, and specific activities of the Campaign.

Overall message of the BiH Campaign in 2008 was *"Stop Violence Against Women – Implement Laws – Punish Perpetrators!"*

Evaluation meeting was held in Zenica on 15 and 16 December 2008 with objective to provide space for representatives of women's associations and media to evaluate activities of the BiH Campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, and initiate planning of the Campaign for 2009.

- United Women Banja Luka coordinated preparation of the Joint Calendar of Activities for Campaign on both local and English language, and shared with women's associations and human rights civil society groups throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia (via e-mail listserv cikcak@zenska-mreza.hr), Serbia (via e-mail listserv zenskaposla@zamir.net), and women and men gender equality activists worldwide through submitting it to the Center for Global Women's Leadership (CWGL), the organization that coordinates activities and information share about 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence on the global level. Joint Calendar of Activities for BiH Campaign was included in 2008 International Calendar of Activities.¹⁴ The BiH Calendar of Activities was also shared with key electronic and printed media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, international organizations, as well as official institutions at all levels that have authorities to work on protection and promotion of gender equality. Women' Group "Foundation CURE" from Sarajevo also started a web blog on BiH Campaign 16 Days of Activism in 2008 at <http://16danaaktivizma.blogger.ba/>

- In order to improve access to resources, planning and implementation of activities during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign in BiH, United Women Banja Luka also prepared local language translation of 2008 16 Days of Activism Tool Kit, consisting of following documents: Campaign Announcement, Campaign Profile, Description of Dates, Suggested Actions: A Guide to Getting Involved for New Activists, Demands for Action, 10 Ways You Can Engage, Bibliography and Resource List. These materials were not accessible on local language during previous years of the campaign implementation. Translated Tool Kit was shared with women's organizations and groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia (via above mentioned e-mail list serves).

- United Women Banja Luka prepared draft of the Open Letter to advocate for changes of BiH laws of social protection on entity and cantonal levels in BiH. Together with women's groups throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, we advocated for introducing provisions that would recognize victims of domestic violence as beneficiaries of social assistance, and recognizing shelters for women and children victims of domestic violence as institutions of social protection. The Letter has been finalized in wide consultations with women's associations throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, and sent individually by each organization that supported the Campaign to official institutions at entity and cantonal level in BiH authorized to work on social protection, drafting, and adoption of legislation, institutional mechanisms for gender equality, and electronic and printed media throughout BiH.¹⁵

- With support of Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation from Sweden, United Women Banja Luka and Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka prepared and distributed 11.000 info leaflets on 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina Campaign 2008. Info leaflets consisted of contact information of women's NGOs in BiH that are providing assistance to women victims of violence, reminder on key dates within the Campaign, and demands for state institutions to ensure rights of women to live free from violence, and punish perpetrators of violence against women.¹⁶ Info leaflets were distributed throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina by women's NGOs during the Campaign activities, namely during street actions that were organized simultaneously on 24 November – in the eve of the International Day of Fighting Against Violence Against Women.

¹⁴ 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in 2008, International Calendar of Activities – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Direct Link: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/kit08/cal/europe/bosniaherzegovinacal.doc>

¹⁵ English language translation of the Open Letter – Call for Changes of the BiH Laws on Social Protection is available at United Women Banja Luka web page, Direct Link: http://www.unitedwomenbl.org/docs/Open_Letter.pdf

¹⁶ Info leaflets as a part of the Campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2008 are available for download at the web page of United Women Banja Luka. Direct links: http://www.unitedwomenbl.org/images/home/strana1_letak-nasilje2.jpg and http://www.unitedwomenbl.org/images/home/strana2_letak-nasilje2.jpg

- Billboards with key message of the Campaign and signature “Women’s Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina” were prepared and placed at key traffic frequent locations in eight (8) cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar, Vitez, Modriča, Bihać, Prijedor, and Gradiška. Billboards remained at streets of these cities in the period from 16 November to 15 December 2008. With resources available through support EED Germany, United Women Banja Luka helped specific actions of sister women’s NGOs in six (6) cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina – “Foundation of Local Democracy” from Sarajevo, Women’s Association “Woman BiH” Mostar, Women’s Association “Women from Una” Bihac, Association “Woman and Family” Gradiska, Women’s Association “Lara” Bijeljina, and “Foundation for Education, Development, and Social Protection of Children” Prijedor. Activities they organized were press conferences, street actions, and round table.

Results:

- Six (6) street actions were organized by local women’s NGOs in Sarajevo, Mostar, Bihać, Gradiška, Prijedor and Bijeljina, with participation of hundred and thirty seven (137) women and men volunteers of local NGOs, women politicians, local women journalists, police, and center for social work, health institutions, schools, and local public administration.

- Six (6) press conferences were organized by local women’s NGOs in Sarajevo, Mostar, Bihać, Gradiška, Prijedor and Bijeljina, with participation of local women activists, representatives of institutional mechanisms for gender equality at entity and state level, and local public institutions.

- One thematic round table on the issue of domestic violence and violence against women was organized in Gradiška, with participation of twenty-nine (29) women teachers, public servants in local administration, journalists, and common citizens of Gradiška and surrounding local communities. Concrete recommendations are defined aimed for enhancing assistance and protection of women and children victims of violence in Gradiška region.

- Forty –eight (48) electronic and printed media throughout BiH monitored activities of the Campaign, and covered it with news articles, stories, and reports. In Prijedor, RTRS Studio Prijedor initiated production of the documentary about domestic violence with title “Warning,” which was broadcasted several times during the Campaign at Radio Television of Republika Srpska (RTRS). RTRS also developed its own Calendar of Activities during 16 Days of Activism, and prepared and broadcasted numerous news reports, interviews, stories, and special programs about issue of violence against women. Radio Federation of BiH prepared special programs related to 16 Days of Activism – one-hour contact program related to women’s human rights, and TV Alfa Sarajevo – one-hour special program on violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Articles about activities of “Woman BiH” Mostar and activities during the Campaign 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based violence were also published on web info portals www.bljesak.info, and www.rtvmo.ba. News reports about activities of “Women from Una” during 16 Days of Activism Campaign was broadcasted in central news program on 25 November 2008 at RTV USK, and news program of Radio Bihać, which was also exchanged with Radio Free Europe, and articles were published in newspapers “Krajina” and magazine “San.” Local and cantonal media in Bihać region were preparing special programs and articles related to the specific days of the Campaign.

- Info leaflets on violence against women that were distributed during the Campaign were well received by women and men citizens as a source of information about services and assistance available to victims of violence.

- Calendar of activities of women’s NGOs in BiH for 16 Days of Activism enhanced media coverage of specific activities of women’s NGOs, encouraged various media initiatives as support to the Campaign, and contributed to improving networking and information share with women activists in BiH, as well as within the region, and internationally.

- Local language translation of the Tool Kit for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence published by the Center for Global Women’s Leadership (CGWL) enabled participants in the BiH Campaign to have great resource for planning local activities, education of membership, and awareness rising activities that targeted journalists and professionals in local public institutions.

- Participation and support of local public institutions and women delegates in municipal assemblies in activities of the 16 Days of Activism in BiH was identified as a good result of the Campaign in some local communities. The action was seen as opportunity for enhancing concrete actions for improving assistance for women victims of violence. Creativity and great support of young women and men volunteers in the 16 Days of Activism organized by individual women’s associations throughout BiH contributed in enhancing their awareness about gender based violence, and improving their involvement in future actions of NGOs on this issue.

A.4 Mobile Team for Field Interventions in Cases of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka Region

During 2008, United Women Banja Luka continued to contribute in the activities of the Team for Assistance and Support for Victims of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka region. The Team has been established based on the Protocol for Assistance and Support to Victims of Domestic Violence, signed in June 2007 by the City Administration Banja Luka, Center for Social Work Banja Luka, Center for Public Security (police) Banja Luka, and nongovernmental organization "United Women" Banja Luka.

Aim of the Team is to ensure prompt and efficient protection of victims of domestic violence, and undertake adequate measures for urgent protection of victims, as well as conducting necessary activities for initiating judicial procedure against perpetrators of domestic violence.

The Team for Assistance and Support for Victims of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka consists from representatives of police – police officers authorized to intervene in region where a case of domestic violence is reported, representative of the Center for Social Work Banja Luka, and representative of the „United Women“ Banja Luka. Representative of „United Women“ Banja Luka on a duty shift joins the Team upon call from representative of the Center for Social Work Banja Luka. Together they go to the place where case of domestic violence was reported. The duty shifts are organized within 24 hours period, during working days, weekend, and holidays.

In the period from 1 January until 31 December 2008, three female and one male representatives of "United Women" Banja Luka participated in two hundred and thirty four (234) field interventions of the Mobile Team. The largest number of cases of domestic violence was reported in families living in urban settlements – 65%. It has been registered that predominant perpetrators of violence were men - 226 (or 97.6%), while only 8 women (or 2.4%) were registered as perpetrators of violence. During 2008, the largest percentage of victims recognized domestic violence as combined in all its forms – 61.5%. Beside that, in 14.1% cases, victims recognized it as physical violence.

Results and Indicators of Good Practice in Providing Support and Assistance for Victims of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka:

- Improved coordination and exchange of information between Center for Social Work Banja Luka, Center for Public Security Banja Luka, and "United Women" Banja Luka with purpose of support and assistance to victims of domestic violence.
- Established multi-disciplinary intervention system supportive to victims of violence and available for 24 hours,
- Women and children survivors of domestic violence are receiving urgent medical assistance if necessary.
- Admittance in the Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Banja Luka is conducted based on joint assessment of women and men members of the Mobile Team in the moment of acute violence, and based on voluntary acceptance of a victim to be sheltered in the Safe House.
- Women survivors of domestic violence and their children are receiving counseling and support by qualified women and men professionals from the Mobile Team and the Safe House. Whenever possible in concrete cases, we are striving to keep women and children survivors of violence in their home. During stay in the Safe House, women and children survivors of domestic violence are taking first steps of re-socialization.
- Women and men representatives of the Center for Social Work Banja Luka and "United Women" Banja Luka are together searching for exit strategies for women survivors of domestic violence in order to help their re-socialization and return to normal life.
- Adequate shelter is secured for women survivors of domestic violence so they can leave violent partners.
- Women survivors domestic violence have support in safe and sustainable life (through re-socialization, education, re-entering labor market, and other types of support).
- Secured continuous financial support for the work of Mobile Team and Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Banja Luka through the public budget of City Administration of Banja

B. Media and Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Key Laws, Public Policies, and International Documents in this Area:

- Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by Parliamentary Assembly of BiH in June 2003 – Article 16 - Everyone shall have equal right to access media, regardless sex. No person irrespective of sex shall be publicly presented in an offensive, humiliating, or degrading way. Through their programming, media shall develop gender equality awareness;
- Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by Council of Ministers of BiH in September 2006 – Chapter 8 – Gender Sensitive Media;

- Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by United Nations in 1979, and succeeded by Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 1993. Concluding comments of the Committee for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Bosnia and Herzegovina, CEDAW/C/BiH/CO/3 – identified need for conducting wide awareness rising campaigns to address both women and men, and media should be encouraged to project positive images of women and of the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in private and public spheres;
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (China) in September 1995, and signed by Bosnia and Herzegovina. Strategic Objective J.1 - Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication, and Strategic Objective J.2 - Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media;
- Council of Europe - Recommendation No. R (84) 17 on Equality Between Women and Men in the Media, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 25 September 1984;
- Council of Europe - Recommendation 1555 on the image of women in the media, adopted by the COE Assembly on 24 April 2002;
- Council of Europe – Resolution 1557 and Recommendation 1799 on the image of women in advertising, adopted by COE Assembly on 26 June 2007.

***Naglasiti sivo oznaceni tekst u odvojenom boxu**

B.1 Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina = Informed Public Opinion and Gender Sensitive Media

United Women Banja Luka is implementing this project since 2005, with support of Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED), from Germany and partnership with Amica e.V. from Freiburg, Germany. In 2008, the German Committee of the World Day of Prayer provided additional support to the project.

Activities in 2008:

Three-day workshop “Reporting about Violence against Women and Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Challenging Stereotypes” (20-22 March 2008, Banja Luka), two-day thematic workshop “Equal Representation and Portrayal of Women and Men Politicians in BiH Media” (11-13 June 2008, Banja Luka), working meeting/workshop “Gender Equality and Equal Possibilities” for women and men spokespersons of the ministries in the Government of Republika Srpska (19 June 2008, Banja Luka); two-day thematic workshop “Results of Women’s Pre-election Campaign” (23-25 October 2008, Banja Luka), two-day working meeting/workshop “Planning of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in BiH” (3-4 November 2008, Banja Luka), coordination of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence in BiH (25 November - 10 December 2008, countrywide), two-day working meeting/workshop “Evaluation of the 16 Days of Activism in 2008, and discussing applying for the collective membership of women’s NGOs in BiH in the European Women’s Lobby” (15-16 December 2008, Zenica).

Results:

- Hundred and fifty three (153) participants – forty nine (49) women and sixteen (16) men representatives of electronic and printed media, official institutions, political parties and NGOs from Bosnia and Herzegovina actively participated in three workshops and three working meeting/workshops, and enhanced their knowledge and awareness on gender equality issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They also increased knowledge on legislative and policy frameworks on gender equality in neighboring countries – Croatia and Serbia, and learned about challenges, strategies and best practices in working on gender equality issues from the perspective of women’s nongovernmental organizations in these countries, with focus on role and actions of media in prevention of violence against women and non-stereotypical portrayal of women politicians.

- During two workshops held in first half of 2008, women and men participants developed specific recommendations for reporting about violence against women and gender based violence, improving cooperation and networking of media and NGOs in prevention of violence against women and recommendations for gender sensitive media reporting during pre-election campaign for local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina held in October 2008. In follow up period, United Women Banja Luka sent recommendations to all electronic and printed media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, key parliamentary political parties, official institutions with mandate to initiate positive changes – Central Election Commission of BiH, Regulatory Agency for Communications of BiH, responsible ministries at entity and state level, institutional mechanisms for gender equality at all levels in BiH, local women’s and human rights nongovernmental organizations in BiH and the region (via e-mail networks) and international organizations in BiH – UN Gender Group members, and foreign aid agencies.

United Women Banja Luka continued with public advocacy activities aimed to put these recommendations in the practice through meetings and communications with official institutions, political parties, and media statements.

-During workshop aimed for analysis of results women's pre-election campaign held in late October 2008, women politicians candidates at local elections in BiH, women that won seats in local councils/municipal assemblies, women NGO activists, and women journalists of key electronic and printed media in BiH exchanged experiences from the pre-election campaign in 2008, mapped specific challenges, and defined specific recommendations for the campaign for next general elections. The defined recommendations specifically target activities related to regularity of the elections (need for independent monitoring process led by women), education (enhancing gender awareness and building specific skills of women politicians), legislative changes (initiating legislative advocacy actions aimed to enable equal media presentation of male and female candidates in pre-election processes), women's election campaign (actions and steps to ensure women's presence in politics and media, and enhancing women's sections of political parties), and institutional development – work of the commissions for gender equality (strengthening their capacities, knowledge, influence, and resources, as well as collaboration with civil society aimed to ensure equality of women and men in the practice).

- Together with partner women's NGOs throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, United Women Banja Luka closely monitored the pre-election process and media presentations of political parties, with focus on securing equal possibilities for male and female candidates to have access to media presentation, and extent to which media in Bosnia and Herzegovina ensured gender sensitive portrayal of political campaigns. Based on monitoring process and testimonies of women politicians that participated in the elections, it was visible almost complete marginalization of female candidates in media during pre-election campaign, as well as absence of topics related to gender equality and social position of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Political parties did not provide enough possibilities for their female candidates to present in media, and due to rigid rules of the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina related to media presentation of political subjects in pre-election processes, media did not have possibility to produce and broadcast special programs that would promote gender equality and female candidates at the elections.

- One of the planned outputs of the project in this period was to develop the Platform for Action/Memorandum of Understanding aimed to enhance promotion and ensure equal access and portrayal of women in politics in pre-election period in 2008. Regardless continuous advocacy and specific activities implemented by United Women Banja Luka and women's NGOs throughout BiH, and commitment to support this action by numerous women journalists of electronic and printed media in BiH, as well as media management, we did not reach this objective. Central Election Commission of BiH refused to harmonize the rules on media presentation of political subjects in the pre-election period with the Gender Equality Law of BiH, and stated that media in BiH are only obliged to pay attention to provide equal space for presentation of political parties and their candidates, regardless of their sex.

C. Gender Equality in Public and Political Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Key Laws, Public Policies, and International Documents in this Area:

- Article 15 of the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by Parliamentary Assembly of BiH in June 2003, which requires equal representation of women and men in political and public life;
- Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by Council of Ministers of BiH in September 2006 – Chapter 5 – Political Life and Decision Making;
- Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by United Nations in 1979, and succeeded by Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 1993, namely Article 7 related to obligations of the state party to ensure equality of women in public and political life. Concluding comments of the Committee for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Bosnia and Herzegovina, CEDAW/C/BiH/CO/3, in particular comments and recommendations no. 29 and 30 related to need for enhancing representation of women in governance and decision making and harmonization of the Election Law of BiH with the Law on Gender Equality of BiH;
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (China) in September 1995, and signed by Bosnia and Herzegovina. Strategic Objective G.1 – Take measures to ensure equal access of women to and full participation in power structures and decision making, and Strategic Objective G.2 – Increase capacity of women to participate in decision making and leadership.

- Council of Europe - Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making adopted on 12 March 2003, provides guidelines to the member states for inclusion of equal number of women and men into decision-making at all levels of authority.

C.1 Woman Today - Phase 12 - 2008 - Promoting Women's Participation in Public and Political Life

United Women Banja Luka and Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka are implementing this project since 1997, with support of Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation from Sweden.

Activities in 2008:

Preparatory coordination meetings with women politicians, NGO activists and journalists, workshops on gender stereotypes and public policies, public discussions "Actual Moment" and pre-election public discussions in targeted local communities, radio programs, TV programs, round tables, poster campaign and distribution of promotional material during street actions in pre-election period and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, advanced workshop for female candidates for local elections 2008, press conferences, diary of female candidates during pre-election campaign, cooperation on the level of women's network in Bosnia and Herzegovina, printing of the final brochure, and coordination of the "Women's Pre-election Campaign – Local Elections 2008".

Accomplished Results:

Three hundred and sixty one women and men (361) participated in the project activities. Eighty-two (82) women and men citizens of Banja Luka actively participated at public discussions, and expressed opinion about women's issues and actual events in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Part of the project activities was presented in media through four TV programs and five radio programs. All project activities were monitored and covered by printed and electronic media.

Initiated activities of lobbying for solving issues that are identified as priorities for women in the actual moment. Four public discussions that were held in four local communities - Gradiška, Prijedor, Kozarska Dubica and Novi Grad enabled us to support female candidates and increase their visibility during pre-election period. During three press conferences, we pointed at marginalization of women, supported female candidates at the local elections, emphasized importance of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, and lobbied for changes of the Law on Social Protection of Republika Srpska.

Hundred and eight (108) female candidates were trained, they were prepared for leading of the personal pre-election campaign.

Women's network was active in the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina during pre-election period. Pre-election Campaign „A Woman for Change“ was implemented along with the official election campaign in September 2008, and aimed to increase visibility of women in election campaign, and increase voters' support to female candidates in local elections held in early October 2008. During the Campaign, 32 billboards were posted countrywide, large number of posters and leaflets were distributed, radio and TV programs were organized. These project activities enabled appearance of women in media during pre-election period. Two street campaigns in twenty (20) cities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina were organized, and women activists talked with citizens about the need for more women in decision-making processes in BiH. Public officials in local communities where we implemented our activities showed readiness to introduce gender responsible public policies in their municipalities. Number of elected women in targeted municipalities is higher than in the whole Bosnia and Herzegovina, and higher than in other municipalities in which we implemented pre-election campaign.

C.2 Public Advocacy Actions Aimed to Improve Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Banja Luka, 25 February 2008

Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Gender Equality Commission of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Center Centre of Republika Srpska Government
 Gender Centre of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Office of the High Representative

OPEN LETTER RELATED TO CONTINUOUS VIOLATION OF THE LAW ON GENDER EQUALITY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS OF BIH IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGES OF THE ELECTION LAW OF BIH

“Helsinki Citizens Assembly” Banja Luka and “United Women” Banja Luka are expressing strong protest because of non-transparent process of the preparing changes and amendments of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as one of the key documents that enables participation of women and men citizens in political life of the country. We are protesting because of repeated omission to harmonize this Law with the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although numerous nongovernmental organizations are pointing at discriminatory provisions of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina for many years, and are requesting changes, institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as initiators of the Law failed to open wide public discussion about changes and amendments of this Law. We received information about this process informally, and latter we could find out more about content of new proposal for changes and amendments through the web page of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“Helsinki Citizens Assembly” Banja Luka and “United Women” Banja Luka are warning that authorities again remained blind on protests that the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not harmonized with the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely the Article 15, which regulates that “governance bodies and bodies of local self governance, management bodies of companies, political parties, and other non-profit organizations will ensure and promote equal gender representation in management and decision making processes.”

We believe that, in relation to this Article, but also other articles of the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, proposal of changes and amendments of the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina must ensure following:

- Each candidate list includes equal number of male and female candidates alternately distributed on candidate list,
- Same rule applies also for compensational lists, so the way of distributing compensational mandates should be harmonized with the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina – compensational mandates should be distributed to persons of less represented sex in governance institution for which elections are organized, and from the list of political party that won the mandate,
- Equal representation of both sexes in all bodies authorized for implementation of the elections at all levels (from the Central Election Commission of BiH to election boards of local communities),
- Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina is respecting the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina when certifying candidates that are elected indirectly (e.g. for the House of Peoples, Council of Ministers, etc.), and in accordance with the Article 15 of the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ensuring equal representation of both sexes in these governance bodies.

We are reminding you that, beside numerous appeals with the same requests, we already warned the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina on violation of the Article 15 of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH during verification of mandates for ministers in Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are all men. Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina responded to our request with justification that they are obliged only to respect the Election Law of BiH and not the Law on Gender Equality of BiH, as this Law is not within their mandate. In relation to this concrete case, we sent request to the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH to examine violation of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH, and undertake legal measures against the Central Election Commission of BiH, but they also responded that this does not comply with their authority.

Based on these responses, “Helsinki Citizens Assembly” Banja Luka and “United Women” Banja Luka decided to file judicial petition against the Central Election Commission of BiH in order to acquire rights from the Law on Gender Equality of BiH. Judicial petition because of unlawful verification of mandates for members of the Council of Ministers of BiH was sent to the Administrative Unit of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Now when there is the opportunity for legal omissions to be fixed, and to harmonize the Election Law of BiH with the Law on Gender Equality of BiH, less represented sex, women, are offered places in the municipal election commissions and election boards!

Is it possible that our authorities have such perception about equal representation of women and men in BiH society, especially in the area of public life? Such acts are again trying to diminish importance of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH, which essential purpose is to prohibit gender-based discrimination in public and political life and establishing more humane relations between sexes in BiH society that still suffers from traditional roles of women and men and patriarchal relations. Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have the same rights as men, especially in the political life, where their role is marginalized and mostly obvious.

There are no legal reasons for avoiding changes of the Election Law in BiH in order to ensure gender equality. The only possible reason for this obstruction is based on personal interests and positions of persons in governance institutions, as well as official bodies that are implementing elections, as they would need to step out from the positions in case of adopting these changes.

We are inviting initiators of the changes and amendments of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as women and men representatives in the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to amend the text and incorporate proposals of the nongovernmental organizations.

We are reminding again that in 2006 the UN Committee for implementation of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) called Bosnia and Herzegovina to harmonize the Election Law of BiH with the Law on Gender Equality of BiH, and strengthen measures for increasing representation of women in elected and appointed bodies of governance. This request is in accordance with the CEDAW, which represents integral part of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it is obligatory for BiH to respect. We are calling authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement fully these recommendations of the United Nations.

We are also calling the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Gender Centers of RS and FBiH to use their mandates and involve into the process in order to prevent that women and men representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH receive the text that neglects obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina toward ratified international conventions and declarations, and which is discriminatory and opposite to the principle of gender equality.

Banja Luka, 20 June 2008

For: Dr. Suad Arnautović, President, Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

From: Nada Golubović, President, "United Women" Banja Luka, Lidija Živanović, Executive Director, "Helsinki Citizens' Assembly" Banja Luka

APPEAL IN RELATION TO LACK OF HARMONIZATION BETWEEN THE RULEBOOK ON MEDIA PRESENTATION OF POLITICAL SUBJECTS DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS WITH THE LAW ON GENDER EQUALITY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Respected Mr. Arnautović,

In relation to announcing new Rulebook on Media Presentation of Political Subjects in the Election Campaign, nongovernmental organizations "Helsinki Citizens Assembly" Banja Luka and "United Women" Banja Luka wish to point you at lack of harmonization between this document and the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

After detailed analysis of the Rulebook, we did not find any article that would guarantee equal representation of both sexes during media presentations of political subjects in the election campaign on the way that is regulated by the Articles 1, 2, 15 and 21 of the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We are using the opportunity to express our dissatisfaction with the fact that representatives of civil society organizations were not involved in developing content of the Rulebook, which shows non-transparency of entire process.

We want to appeal on the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to involve women and men representatives of nongovernmental organizations that are directly or indirectly working on these issues in developing future laws and by-laws.

We also want to inform you that our two associations will again monitor the election process during in 2008, and we will especially focus on pre-election campaign from the aspect of gender equality. We will continue to advocate for changes and amendments of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to harmonize this important law with the Law on Gender Equality of BiH, and enable female candidates to have more significant participation and visibility during and after the election campaign.

Attached to this letter, we are sending you proposal for changes and amendments of the Rulebook on Media Presentation of Political Subjects during Election Campaign, that are adopted on the workshop "Equal Representation and Portrayal of Women and Men Politicians in BiH Media", which was organized from 11 to 13 June 2008 in Banja Luka.

Banja Luka, 20 June 2008

For: Amela Odobašić, Head of the Public Relations Department in the Regulatory Agency for Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

From: Nada Golubović, President, "United Women" Banja Luka, Lidija Živanović, Executive Director, "Helsinki Citizens Assembly" Banja Luka

GENDER EQUALITY IN MEDIA PRESENTATION DURING CAMPAIGN FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS IN 2008 IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Respected Ms. Odobašić,

We would like to thank you for the response on our inquiry from 23 May 2008, and explanation you provided.

Since our founding in 1996, "United Women" Banja Luka and "Helsinki Citizens Assembly" Banja Luka are paying attention to respect local laws, as well as the international conventions and standards, and generally accepted democratic principles and rules. Having in mind this, we do not want to be those who would violate rules and abuse public media space during upcoming election campaign and period of pre-election silence. However, during the past ten years, we are witnessing permanent violation of laws, especially the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and abuse of media space.

As all media in Bosnia and Herzegovina are obliged to respect the Article 16 of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH, and work on developing awareness about gender equality through their program concepts, our two associations will again monitor the election campaign in media, and will inform You and the public about monitoring results. We would like to believe that upcoming campaign for the local elections in 2008 would be fairer and more balanced when it comes to gender equality.

If this fails to happen, we would be forced to request from the Regulatory Agency for Communications of BiH to use its mandate and impose sanctions against those media whose programs do not reflect balanced presentation of candidates of both sexes, or only candidates of one sex are favored.

We are using the opportunity to inform you that "Helsinki Citizens Assembly" Banja Luka and "United Women" Banja Luka will send the appeal to all media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which we will remind them on their obligations from the Article 16 of the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In accordance with our advocacy for greater visibility of women, and increasing women's participation in public and political life, we directed large efforts toward media in BiH, whose influence on creation of public opinion is beyond measure nowadays. We perceive the Regulatory Agency for Communications of BiH as our collaborator, which, as civil society organizations, fights for respecting laws and establishing stable legal state in which gender equality would not be just an empty word, but way of life.

Banja Luka, 24 November 2008

For: People's Assembly of Republika Srpska
Government of Republika Srpska
Ministry of Health and Social Care of Republika Srpska
Board for Equal Possibilities in People's Assembly of RS
Gender Center of RS Government

Cc: Media

OPEN LETTER

On the occasion of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in 2008, and joining the global campaign with our key demand **"Stop Violence Against Women – Implement Laws - Punish Perpetrators of Violence"**, we are approaching to you with the request to:

1. Include *"persons that survived domestic violence"* as beneficiaries of the social protection in the Draft Law on Social Protection of RS, determined at the 98th Session of the Government of Republika Srpska. We request from you to amend the Article 17, Paragraph 1, Point b, as well as the Article 19, in terms of explanation who is considered as a person that survived domestic violence, and
2. To amend the Article 81 of the Law on Social Protection of RS on the way to add Point i) in the Paragraph 1, as follows *"safe houses for women victims of domestic violence"*. Following to that, it is needed to add the Article 119 a., which will include the definition of the Safe House from the Law for Protection from Domestic Violence of RS, and Bylaw on Procedure and Place of the Implementation of the Protection Measure of Securing Protection of a Victim of Domestic Violence of RS.

Justification:

Violence in a family and family community represents a crime, whose victims are predominantly women¹⁷. This crime was not recognized until 2000, when it was incriminated for the first time by the Criminal code of Republika Srpska¹⁸, and now also by the Criminal Law of Republika Srpska¹⁹, and the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of RS²⁰, which recognizes this type of violence as severe violation of human rights, especially women and children²¹. The Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in Republika Srpska regulates implementation of the protection measures against perpetrators of violence, but also measures of protection of victims through accommodation in the Safe Houses²², in accordance with the Bylaw on Procedure and Place of the Implementation of the Protection Measure of Securing Protection of a Victim of Domestic Violence of Republika Srpska²³.

We believe that the Draft Law on Social Protection of RS, as determined at the 98th Session of the Government of Republika Srpska omitted to recognize persons that survived violence in a family and family community as social category, and omitted to recognize the Safe Houses as institutions of social protection. As such, it endangered implementation of the mentioned legal norms and bylaws. It also brought doubt about readiness of the official institutions in Republika Srpska to enable victims and persons that survived this type of violence to use rights from the social protection, beside only declarative recognition of the right to life without domestic violence.

¹⁷ "Centers for public security of Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Doboj, East Sarajevo and Trebinje sent information from which is visible that there were 537 recorded cases of violence in a family and family community in 2006. 277 men and 12 women were reported as perpetrators. In 231 cases, victims were women, and in 39 cases victims were men. During 2007, there were 464 recorded cases of violence in a family and family community. In 121 cases, victims were men, while in 445 cases victims were women. It is especially disturbing fact that in 37 cases victims were boys, and in 48 cases victims were girls". Data taken from the "Draft Strategy for Prevention and Fighting Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period from 2008 to 2010", Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, page 9.

¹⁸ Criminal Code of Republika Srpska. "Official Gazette of Republika Srpska", No. 22/00.

¹⁹ Criminal Law of Republika Srpska. "Official Gazette of Republika Srpska", No. 49/03, 108/04, 37/06 and 70/06

²⁰ "Official Gazette of Republika Srpska", No. 118/05, 17/08

²¹ The Article 3, which change the Article 6, Paragraph 2: "Violence in a family, and especially violence against women and children within a family represents severe violation of women's rights and human rights of children", Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, No. 17/08.

²² The Article 4, which change the Article 7, Paragraph 2-6, Ibidem.

²³ "Official Gazette of Republika Srpska", No. 97/06.

D. Advocacy Against Trafficking of People in Bosnia and Herzegovina

During 2008, "United Women" Banja Luka continued with public advocacy activities and education about the issue of trafficking of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, targeting specifically young boys and girls.

With support of World Vision Australia and World Vision Switzerland, "United Women" Banja Luka continued with implementation of the project *"Prevention of Human Trafficking in Elementary Schools in Banja Luka Region"*, in period from November 2007 until June 2008. Key objective of this initiative is to educate boys and girls students of final grades of elementary schools (7th, 8th, and 9th grade) from Kotor Varoš, Čelinac and Kneževo municipalities, and elementary schools in rural area of Banja Luka on specific issues of trafficking of people.

We worked on increasing awareness among youth boys and girls about existence of trafficking of people, ways of recruiting of victims, and other issues related to trafficking of people, such are drug abuse, prostitution, and smuggling of people. Workshops consisted of role plays on two hypothetical situations that are presenting trafficking of people for the purpose of prostitution and unpaid labor. We also prepared the brochure in a form of comic book that presents situations we focused on in role plays. After the role plays, two lecturers – Boris Ivanovic, Director of SIPA Office in Banja Luka, and Lana Jajcevic, Activist of "United Women" Banja Luka – held theoretical presentations about the issue of trafficking of people, and responded on questions of boys and girls that participated in workshops.

Evaluation workshops consisted of theatre plays on the topic of trafficking of people prepared by boys and girls students in schools targeted by the project. Field trip was also organized for youth people that participated in theatre plays.

"United Women" Banja Luka continued to actively participate in joint advocacy activities aimed for raising awareness and fighting against trafficking of women and girls, and coordination meetings organized by the BiH State Coordinator for Fighting Against Trafficking of People.

5. Strengthening Cooperation with Other Nongovernmental Organizations and Official Institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Abroad

Accomplished Results in 2008

United Women Banja Luka continued to work on strengthening our visibility in local and regional environment and improving cooperation, exchange of information and joint initiatives with other nongovernmental organizations in both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the region. Through various project activities of our Association and public advocacy initiatives aimed to fight violence against women and increase participation and influence of women in political decision making at all levels, we improved cooperation with local women's organizations.

Within program area of fighting violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, United Women Banja Luka cooperated with women's NGOs in BiH members of the Kvinna till Kvinna Network, Gender Coalition, and RING NGO Anti-trafficking Network, and organized joint billboard campaign, distribution of info leaflets, media presentations, and street actions as contribution to 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in period from 25 November – International Day of Fighting Violence Against Women and 10 December – International Day of Human Rights. Following organizations were involved in the campaign: United Women Banja Luka, Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka, Women's Association "Lara" Bijeljina, Foundation "CURE" Sarajevo, Budućnost Modriča, Women's Center Trebinje, Women's Association "Most" Višegrad, Women's Association "Medika" Zenica, Citizen's Association "Vesta" Tuzla, Women's Association "Forma F" Mostar, and Association "Woman and Family" Gradiška. Campaign activities helped us to improve cooperation and gain increased media attention for the issues of violence against women. United Women Banja Luka also collaborated with "Lara" Bijeljina and "Budućnost" Modriča on initiative for introducing gender sensitive and responsive budgeting in the area of fighting domestic violence and violence against women on local and entity level in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Lindsey Korver and Marion van der Bent – Meesters from the Netherlands, members of EUFOR, LOT Mrkonjić Grad participated in 17th Vecernjak's Zagreb Marathon, which was held on 5 October, in order to help fundraising for floor repairing and purchasing necessary equipment for women and children beneficiaries of the Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Banja Luka.

Lindsey and Marion participated in the marathon with personal message "Women Run For Women" wearing T-shirts with sign "Stop Domestic Violence" and logo of United Women Banja Luka. They successfully fundraised 4612, 61 BAM, which they donated to the Safe House Banja Luka.

Within program area related to improving gender equality in media of Bosnia and Herzegovina, United Women Banja Luka continued cooperation with women's NGOs and women journalists and media workers throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, and successfully contributed to improving visibility and impact of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also extended cooperation with women's nongovernmental organizations from Croatia and Serbia, whose representatives contributed in gender equality education of women and men journalists, female politicians, and NGO activists from BiH with sharing their experiences about successes and challenges of gender mainstreaming processes in media.

Within program area aimed to improving gender equality in public and political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina, United Women Banja Luka and Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka cooperated with women's organizations throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina in implementing Pre-election Campaign "Woman for a Change." Members of the network of women's organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina that implemented the Campaign are as follows: „Most“ (Bridge) Višegrad, „Žena BiH“ (Woman of BiH) Mostar, „Duvanjke“ Tomislavgrad, „Žene sa Une“ (Women from Una) Bihać, „Žene ženama“ (Women to Women) and „Cure“ (Girls), Sarajevo, „Centar za pravnu pomoć ženama“ (Legal Aid Centre), Zenica, „Ženski centar“ (Women's Centre) Trebinje, „Horizonti“ (Horizons) Tuzla, „Forum žena“ (Women's Forum) Bratunac, „Sanus“ Prijedor, „Žena i porodica“ (Woman and Family) Gradiška, „Budućnost“ (Future) Modriča, „Lara“ Bijeljina, „Udružene žene“ (United Women) and „Helsinški parlament građana“ (Helsinki Citizens' Assembly) Banja Luka

Within the program area of support to sustainable return in Bosnia and Herzegovina, "United Women" Banja Luka cooperated with the Foundation of Local Democracy from Sarajevo (as the key project implementing bearer) and nongovernmental organizations "Vesta" from Tuzla and "Terca" from Mostar (as partner organizations) on implementation of the project "Monitoring and Analysis of Implementation of Criteria for School Signs and Symbols." The project was implemented in the period from 1 October 2007 until 1 October 2008, with financial support of the European Union. Key objective of the Project was to support for creating preconditions for sustainable return and reintegration of minority returnees into local community through meeting special needs and rights of children minority returnees.

Specific objectives of the project were following:

- Monitoring of implementation of the part of Temporary Agreement about Meeting Special Needs and Rights of Children Returnees related to implementation of the Criteria for Names and Symbols of Schools and School' Manifestations that are not complying with the criteria;
- Mapping schools which, through their name, symbols and school manifestations, are separating children on the basis of their nationality, and therefore contribute to xenophobic practices, and schools that missed to implement the criteria;
- Presenting the monitoring results to women and men citizens and governmental institutions;
- Initiating campaign for removing inappropriate names of schools, school' symbols and objects that are contributing to creation of xenophobic environment;
- Reducing number of schools that did not adjust their names and symbols to the criteria.

Implementation of the project represents contribution to the promotion of sustainable return, which is one of the key program areas of "United Women" Banja Luka, but also protection of minority rights, strengthening social and economic position of women and men returnees and their reintegration into local community.

United Women Banja Luka continued cooperation with Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation Sweden, Amica e. V. from Germany, and Global Rights, office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it enabled us to widen our perspectives on fighting for better position of women in our country through learning from their experiences and examples from other countries.

United Women Banja Luka improved cooperation with official institutions, especially those responsible for policy development and improvement of women's human rights and gender equality in BiH society. We strengthened our cooperation with women politicians in legislative and executive governance at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely women involved in work of People's Assembly of Republika Srpska, City Administration Banja Luka, Gender Center of Republika Srpska Government, Gender Center of Federation of BiH Government, and Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

6. Strategic Priorities in the Work of United Women Banja Luka during 2009

United Women Banja Luka will continue to follow our strategic objectives from previous period, and especially focus on following priorities:

- **Fighting against violence against women and diminishing gender based discrimination in private and public life**, with focus on increasing sensibility of the official institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina on this issue, developing and implementation of educational programs with different target groups aimed for increasing awareness about domestic violence, and public advocacy actions, namely 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in BiH and actions aimed to ensure real implementation of domestic laws and international conventions aimed to protect women from all forms of violence;
- **Increasing access to justice for women victims of violence, and providing direct free legal and psychosocial support for women and children victims of domestic violence** through legal counseling, contribution in work of Mobile Team for Field Interventions in Cases of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka and services of Safe House for Women and Children Victims of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka;
- **Public advocacy for real implementation of Gender Equality Law of BiH and Gender Action Plan of BiH**, as key legislative and public policy documents aimed for ensuring equality of women and men in private and public life through monitoring work of official institutions at all levels;
- **Diminishing discrimination and abuse of women in electronic and printed media in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, through public advocacy actions and activities aimed to improve portrayal of women and women's issues in media, create conditions for equal access of women and men on creation of media policies, and increase of gender sensitivity of women and men journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- **Empowering women to participate in political and social changes** through their active role in creation of public policies, and political decision making on local, entity, and state level in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- **Fighting trafficking of women and girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina** through public advocacy and educational activities aimed for increasing public awareness about the issue among youth people as the key target group, but also women and men citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- **Supporting sustainable return and social development in Bosnia and Herzegovina** through work on strengthening position of women in urban and rural communities, and implementing activities that contribute to peace and reconciliation processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- **Strengthening cooperation with other nongovernmental organizations and official institutions** at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and other countries in the region, with key objective of enhancing implementation of domestic laws and international conventions aimed to protect women's human rights and gender equality;
- **Developing internal capacities and working on organizational development** of "United Women" Banja Luka, through continuous capacity building of professional staff, volunteers and supporters

7. Organizational Structure of the United Women Banja Luka

Nada Golubović – President of the Association, BSc. Technology, Faculty of Technology, Specialization in Medical Biochemistry

A. Members of Management Board:

Stanka Miletić, (retired) Teacher, Vice-president of the Association

Mile Dmičić, PhD, Constitutional Court of Republika Srpska, Member

Danica Berberović, PhD. Professor at the Faculty of Economy, Banja Luka, BiH, Member

Miodrag Živanović, PhD. Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, Banja Luka, BiH, Member

Zvezdana Rajkovača, MD. Professor at the Faculty of Medicine, Banja Luka, BiH, Member

Boris Ivanović, SIPA, Banja Luka, BiH, Member

B. Professional Staff:

Aleksandra Radeta Stegić – Secretary of the Association, Professor of History (BA. History, Faculty of Philosophy Banja Luka, Department for History)

Lana Jajčević – Lawyer, Project Coordinator, (BA. Law, Faculty of Law Banja Luka)
Natalija Petrić – Practicing Attorney, Legal Advisor, (BA. Law, Faculty of Law, Barrister Exam, M.A. in Gender Studies, Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies, University of Sarajevo, BiH)
Dijana Đurić – Clinical Psychologist, Supervisor and Psychotherapist in the Safe House Banja Luka (BA. Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, M.A. Student of Psychology, Banja Luka)
Miroslav Samardžić – Financial Manager, Project Coordinator, Graduated Economist (BSc. Economics, Faculty of Economics, Banja Luka)
Aleksandra Petrić – Human Rights Advisor, Project Coordinator, (BA. Law, Faculty of Law, Banja Luka, M.A. International Human Rights, Joseph Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, Colorado, USA)
Minja Damjanović – Project Coordinator, Graduated Economist (BSc. Economics, Faculty of Economics Banja Luka)
Amela Bašić – Coordinator of the Safe House Banja Luka, Graduated Psychologist (BA. Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy Banja Luka, Department of Psychology)
Dragana Miljević – Social Worker of the Safe House, Banja Luka (BA. Social Work, Faculty of Philosophy Banja Luka, Department of Social Work)
Nada Jeličić – Housekeeper, Safe House Banja Luka, High School
Marjeta Grbić – Nurse, Safe House Banja Luka, High School
Gordana Vrbica – Nurse, Safe House Banja Luka, High School
Jasminka Pavić – Nurse, Safe House Banja Luka, High School
Milica Smiljanić – Chief Nurse, Safe House Banja Luka, University Level Degree

C. SOS Telephone Volunteers:

Amela Bašić, Graduated Psychologist (BA. Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy Banja Luka, Department of Psychology)
Anja Damjanović, Student of Economics, (Faculty of Economics Banja Luka)
Minja Damjanović, Graduated Economist (Faculty of Economics Banja Luka)
Jovanka Ivković, Economic Technician, High School
Jelena Jeličić, Student of Design, (Faculty for Electronic Business and Design Banja Luka)
Maja Kovjenić, BA. Candidate in Psychology, (Faculty of Philosophy Banja Luka)
Iva Papić, Graduated Psychologist (M.A. Student of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy Banja Luka, Department for Psychology)
Branka Spremo, Student of Serbian Language and Literature, (Faculty of Philosophy Banja Luka, Department of Serbian Language and Literature)
Snežana Spremo, Student of Psychology and English Language and Literature, (Faculty of Philosophy Banja Luka, Departments of Psychology, and English Language and Literature)
Stanka Spremo, Student of French Language and Literature (Faculty of Philosophy Banja Luka, Department of French Language and Literature)

8. Financial Overview of the United Women Banja Luka for 2008

No.	Donor	Title of the Project	Amount per Contract in BAM	Duration of the Project
1	EED Germany	Gender Equality in BiH	238.611	1.1.2008. – 31.12.2010.
2	Word Vision (in partnership with NGO "Genesis" Banja Luka)	Prevention of Human Trafficking	22.634	20.11.2007. – 1.6.2008.
3	City Administration Banja Luka	Running Costs of the Safe House Banja Luka	54.114	1.1.2008. – 31.12.2008.
4	Government of Republika Srpska	Running Costs of the Safe House Banja Luka	125.000	1.1.2008. – 31.12.2008.
5	Center for Social Work Banja Luka (partnership project with the Center for Public Security BL and Center	Team for Assistance and Support for Victims of Domestic Violence in Banja Luka	70.989	1.1.2008. – 31.12.2008.

	for Social Work BL)			
6	Gender Center of RS Government	One Time Assistance for the Safe House Banja Luka	50.000	1.1.2008. – 31.12.2008.
7	Center for Social Work Banja Luka	Running Costs of the Safe House Banja Luka	6.240	1.1.2008. – 31.12.2008.
8	Foundation of Local Democracy Sarajevo (in partnership with NGO Terca Mostar and NGO Vesta Tuzla)	Monitoring and Analysis of Harmonization with the Criteria for School Names and Symbols in BiH	48.101	1.10.2007. – 1.9.2008.
9	Word Prayers Day	Gender Equality in BiH	16.429	1.5.2008. – 31.12.2008.
10	Word Vision (in partnership with NGO "Genesis" Banja Luka)	Prevention of Human Trafficking II	21.840	1.10.2008. – 1.6.2009.
11	UNFPA	SOS Line for Victims of Domestic Violence	3.628	1.10.2008. – 31.12.2008.
12	Ministry of Management and Local Self-Governance of RS Government	One Time Assistance for the Safe House Banja Luka	2.000	2008.
13	Kosig Dunav Insurance Company	One Time Assistance for the Safe House Banja Luka	250	2008.
14	Individual Donations	Safe House Banja Luka	848	2008.
15	City Administration Banja Luka	Travel Costs of United Women Banja Luka team member at NGO Conference in Brisel	950	2008.
16	Kvinna till Kvinna Sweden	Woman and Law XII	95.834	1.1.2008. – 31.12.2008.
17	Interest Rates for 2008	Per all accounts	864	2008.
18	Membership Fee		0	2008.
	Total		758.332	

Enter in 2008	Amount in BAM
Transfer from 2007	107. 374,76
Donor Contribution	582. 634,01
Donations of Individuals	848,60
Interest Rates	863,92
TOTAL:	691.721,29

Costs in 2008	In BAM
Nett Salaries	124.057, 67
Taxes and Contributions on Salaries	61.927, 37
Fees per Contracts and Stipends	143.804, 20
Taxes and Contributions per Contracts	13.648, 77
Equipment	49.942, 72
Office Costs	13.430,42
Costs of the Activities	239. 339, 05
Bank Fees	3.214,05
Auditing Costs	3.517,64
Total	652.881, 89
Balance – transfer from 2009	38.777,91



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PUBLICATION PREPARED BY:

United Women Banja Luka

Address: Kalemegdanska 18, 78000 Banja Luka

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Telephone: +387 51 458 852

Telephone&Fax: +387 51 458 851

E-mail: office@unitedwomenbl.org

Web: <http://www.unitedwomenbl.org>

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Editor:

Aleksandra Petrić

For the Publisher:

Nada Golubović

Layout:

Maja Ilić

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