

**Securing Local Budgets for Women’s Shelters:
 United Women Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

| General Information | | |
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| Title of the initiative: Gender budgeting initiative in the area of domestic violence at local and entity levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina | | |
| Region/ country Southeast Europe Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska) Banja Luka, Bijeljina and Modrica | Duration of the initiative April - December 2007 | |
| Implementing partner(s) and stakeholders “United Women” Banja Luka* “Buducnost” Modrica “Lara” Bijeljina | Topic/ subject Main groups: women and children survivors; political representatives; human rights advocates Sectors: Social protection Forms of violence: Domestic violence Approach: Policy development; Budgets | Search criteria – Keywords Domestic violence, public financing of shelters, women and children survivors, policy development, gender-responsive budgeting |
| Are there any guides, handbooks, training manuals, audiovisual materials or other products developed for this initiative? Please tick the appropriate box: No Yes <u>"Opportunities and Challenges For Introducing Gender-Sensitive Budgeting in The Area of Domestic Violence on Local And Entity Level in Bosnia and Herzegovina."</u> See the video . Can they be publicly shared? No Yes | Was the initiative evaluated? Please tick the appropriate box: No Yes Indicate the type of Evaluation: Self-reported Multi-stakeholder assessment External evaluation Impact Other _____ Please attach the evaluation report. Can it be publicly shared? No Yes | Donors UNIFEM |
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What is the promising practice?

Advocating for the public financing of costs related to the running of shelters and safe houses for women and child victims of domestic violence in Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During 2007, from April to December, United Women Banja Luka, together with two partner organizations, “Buducnost” in Modrica and “Lara” in Bijeljina, implemented an innovative project titled, *Gender Budgeting Initiative in the Area of Domestic Violence at Local and Entity Levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. The main goal of the project was to include the local and entity authorities of Republika Srpska in the prevention and protection of women and children victims of domestic violence by including shelter running costs in their budgets to ensure sustainable public financing¹. In order to achieve this goal, gender-responsive budgeting was used to collect the information necessary to lobby officials in charge at both the entity and local levels, such as data on existing budget allocations by different social protection institutions to protect women who become victims of domestic violence and estimates of required budget allocations, as per needs identified by existing shelters.

Results:

As a result of the initiative, key local and entity officials recognized the need and have become involved in the prevention and protection of women and children from domestic violence. The outcomes of the project are as follows:

- Inclusion of shelter² running costs in the local and entity budgets -
 - 153.387,50 € in the 2008 budget of the Ministry for Family, Youth and Sport Republika Srpska (later transferred to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection);
 - 36.870 € in the budget of the City of Banja Luka for shelter operating costs; and
 - 15.339 € in the Municipality of Bijeljina’s budget for construction of a shelter.
- Passing of amendments to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence (2008) mandating public entity (70 percent) and municipality (30 percent) budget financing of shelter³ running costs.
- Strengthened NGO capacities in budget analysis and advocacy.
- During a conference organized by United Women in December 2007, women’s organizations that run shelters for victims of domestic violence in BiH expressed interest to replicate the advocacy model developed by United Women and their partners to try to secure public funding for shelter running costs, particularly in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Generation of high media interest which raised awareness of the local and entity authorities’ role in the protection and prevention of domestic violence among the general public.

Background Information:

¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina is a state of two entities: Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the District of Brcko. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of 10 cantons. The state of Bosnia and Herzegovina has limited jurisdiction, as entities and cantons are in full charge of several important sectors, like social politics, health, education, etc. Due to this, and the fact that there are two different entity Laws on Domestic Violence Protection, it was decided to focus project activities on the entity of Republika Srpska.

² At the time of project implementation, there were 3 shelters in Republika Srpska, with the capacity of 50 beds.

³ All shelters in Bosnia and Herzegovina (also in Republika Srpska), with the exception of one church-run shelter in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, are NGO-run.

United Women Banja Luka is an organization that has been working on protection of women's human rights since 1996. In addition to offering direct services to women victims of domestic violence that state institutions lack (SOS hotlines, offices for free legal assistance and, from 2007⁴, shelters for women and children who are survivors of domestic violence), the organization advocates and lobbies for changes in the legal framework and works on education and sensitization of different groups in society, including politicians, media, health workers, police officers and social workers.

In response to the lack of state-provided services to women who have survived domestic violence, women's NGOs emerged in all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to offer free legal assistance, SOS telephones and shelters. It is important to note that all these services were (and in most cases still are) supported by international donors or one-off state donations. In the territory of Republika Srpska, with a population of more than 1,500,000, only **one** shelter (in the town of Modrica) operated between 2000 and 2007, with the capacity to host 16 people.⁵ Taking into consideration that United Women Banja Luka SOS hotline⁶ alone received more than 8.000 calls from 1997 to 2009, the need for a greater number of shelters was evident. According to the Gender Center of Republika Srpska, 445 women living on that territory became victims of domestic violence crimes in 2007.

From the beginning, United Women maintained a policy recognizing that shelter management should not be financed from international donors or one-off state donations and that responsibility for the provision of these critical services is the responsibility of government, as stated in the numerous international and national documents signed by Bosnia and Herzegovina. Previous noteworthy steps included: a decision by the Assembly of City of Banja Luka in 2002 that shelter running costs are to be financed from the Banja Luka local public budget (even before the house was bought and equipped) and the one-off donation from the Government of Republika Srpska to United Women in 2003 for the purchase of the house. The other municipalities involved in the project (Bijeljina and Modrica) did not have similar pre-existing local decisions.

Although there was no specific provision for public shelter financing in the national legal framework, and no bylaws regulating the work of the shelters⁷, a good starting point for the implementation of this initiative was ensured by the existence of international and national legal frameworks that forbid violence against women and the violation of women's human rights; existing good infrastructure (houses for victims, educated personnel to work with survivors); good relations with politicians holding key positions in the Entity's and local parliaments; and prior lobbying experience.

Analysis of the Process:

All the activities under this initiative can be divided into 3 phases:

- budget analysis
- advocacy

⁴ United Women Banja Luka opened a shelter on December 11, 2006 that, due to the insecure funding, started sheltering women from February 2007.

⁵ Running costs of the shelter in Modrica were, until 2008, completely financed by international donations.

⁶ There are currently five NGOs in all parts of Republika Srpska that have SOS hotlines for women and children who are suffering from domestic violence. These telephones are joined in a SOS hotline network 1264 from 2005.

⁷ Ministry of Health and Social Protection RS created a bylaw regulating the work of the shelters during the project implementation period.

- sharing information with other NGOs that are managing shelters for domestic violence victims

Budget Analysis Phase:

In the first project phase, researchers from all three organizations analyzed the budgets of local Centers for Social Work⁸ (Banja Luka, Bijeljina and Modrica), while one researcher analyzed the budget of the Republika Srpska Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

The analysis was performed by:

- Looking at the budgets of all named institutions;
- Collecting gender disaggregated data on the institutions beneficiaries; and
- Using a specially-created questionnaire to collect information on budgetary processes within the analyzed institutions, laws that govern their work, etc.⁹

Parallel to these activities, the organizations created a budget for the shelters in Banja Luka and Modrica and an investment plan for the shelter in Bijeljina¹⁰. The costing of the shelters was based on existing costs of accommodating 20 persons (women and children) in Banja Luka¹¹ and 12 persons (women and children) in Modrica¹². In Bijeljina, an investment plan was drafted for establishing a center.¹³ All the costs in the budget were divided into fixed and variable costs and the project team lobbied the entity officials to take responsibility for fixed costs and the local officials for variable costs¹⁴.

In the creation and implementation of these activities, the principles of gender-responsive budgeting were followed. The steps included:

- Identification of the specific need of the women targeted – the need to have access to domestic violence shelters;
- Formation of a link between the need and the existing legislation;
- Analysis of policies in a particular social category to see if the need was being addressed; if means were being allocated; and
- Calculation of the amount of money to be allocated from the local/entity public budgets to meet this need.

⁸ Centres for Social Work are municipality institutions that are authorized to provide services to citizens that are in “social need”. The majority of the beneficiaries of this institution are defined by the entity Law on Social Protection, which does not recognize women victims of domestic violence as people in social need and similarly does not recognize shelters as institutions of social protection. This is important, because inclusion of domestic violence victims and shelters in this Law means automatic, secure, system-based, public financial support.

⁹ Please consult the questionnaire as part of the publication: Golubović, Nada and Damjanović, Minja .

"Opportunities and Challenges For Introducing Gender Sensitive Budgeting in The Area of Domestic Violence on Local And Entity Level in Bosnia and Herzegovina." United Women, Banja Luka: 2007, pp 56-59.

[<http://www.unitedwomenbl.org/docs/Gender%20budget%20ENG%20web.pdf>]. Accessed March 3, 2010.

¹⁰ Following from the great need for a shelter for domestic violence victims and the interest shown by the local municipality to open a shelter on its territory, local NGOs that were already offering assistance to the domestic violence survivors through the SOS hotline and the office for free legal assistance decided to engage in the process of opening a shelter.

¹¹ Please see full chart of costs in *Opportunities and Challenges*, 2007, p.26.

¹² Please see full chart of costs in *Opportunities and Challenges*, 2007, p. 37.

¹³ “The calculation was based on the market prices of real estate and prices of construction services and material in the area of Bijeljina Municipality. The targeted location was a suburb, up to 6 kilometers distanced from the City. If the targeted location were a city zone, the price would be 30% higher, because of higher costs for renting, construction approval, and construction land.” (*Opportunities and Challenges*, 2007: 38)

¹⁴ The problems that emerged at that point were that municipalities opposed allocating the money for sheltering victims who are not inhabitants of their territory; some municipalities opposed allocating the money; and some municipalities did not have the necessary funds to make the allocations. Hence, it is of the utmost importance that the entity government takes the biggest responsibility for financing the shelter’s running costs.

The collected information helped identify several issues, including:

- How budgets in these institutions are created;
- Which laws needed to be addressed/changed in order to secure public financing; and
- How to go about advocating for the inclusion of the costs during the budgetary process.

The analysis revealed that:

- There were not any means allocated for the support of domestic violence victims in the budgets of 3 out of 4 institutions¹⁵;
- The budgets were not gender-responsive; and
- Lack of gender disaggregated data in all cases and lack of data on individual beneficiaries in one case (Ministry of Health) make it almost impossible to collect the information on what problems are being addressed through budget allocations.

The publication, *[Opportunities and Challenges For Introducing Gender Sensitive Budgeting in The Area of Domestic Violence on Local And Entity Level in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)*¹⁶ was produced detailing the activities conducted during the budget analysis and the findings.

Advocacy Phase:

The collected information was used for advocacy in the second phase. Three round tables¹⁷ were organized with the responsible local and entity officials in order to:

- Describe the position of women victims of violence in society and vis-à-vis the social sector;
- Advocate for the opening of public sector financed shelters based on the costs determined in the analysis; and
- Insist that local and entity government share this responsibility in the proportions proposed.¹⁸

The lobbying for not only the creation of separate budget lines, but also for the necessary changes in the Republika Srpska Law on Domestic Violence Protection and Law on Social Protection, were undertaken in order to have a national legal base and framework that supports and defines the need for ongoing shelter-financing activities.

Sharing Information Phase:

In the final phase, the experience and methodology was shared with other NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina dealing with insecure shelter financing to develop their capacities and to obtain the needed support for implementation of similar activities in the other Bosnia and Herzegovina entity.¹⁹

Lessons Learned:

¹⁵ There was no separate budget line in 3 of 4 analysed budgets.

¹⁶ Golubović, Nada and Damjanović, Minja . "Opportunities and Challenges For Introducing Gender Sensitive Budgeting in The Area of Domestic Violence on Local And Entity Level in Bosnia and Herzegovina." United Women, Banja Luka: 2007. [<http://www.unitedwomenbl.org/docs/Gender%20budget%20ENG%20web.pdf>]. Accessed March 3, 2010.

¹⁷ There was one round table in each of the municipalities where the budget analysis was performed.

¹⁸ Our suggestion was that entity budget should be responsible for 70% - fixed costs, and local municipalities' budgets for 30% - variable costs of the shelter running costs.

¹⁹ This project was completed in 2009.

- For United Women Banja Luka and for the partners, it was the first time gender-responsive budgeting was used. The technical nature of the undertaking required the assistance of UNIFEM staff.
- Through the process a great deal of new information was generated that proved critical in lobbying and advocating for inclusion of adequate shelter operating costs in the local/entity budgets.
- The biggest problem was the lack of cooperation from the RS Ministry of Health and Social Protection, which is the responsible entity-level Ministry. The Ministry and particularly the leadership of the Ministry opposed the project in all project phases, from offering limited information to not responding to round tables. Although we have improved cooperation with this Ministry, the obstruction is still present and it shows the importance of political will, whether favorable or unfavorable, for any advocacy initiative.²⁰
- Local and entity parliamentarians, who were supportive during the entire process were key in moving the process forward, despite some of the challenges faced with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.
- Prior cooperation and excellent working relations with women parliamentarians was crucial in lobbying for the inclusion of the shelter operating costs in the local/entity budgets.

Recommendations:

There were several aspects that contributed to achieving planned results. For organizations trying to advocate for public and secure financing of services for women survivors of gender-based violence, there are several important considerations:

- Follow the steps of gender-responsive budgeting, as outlined in the ‘Analysis of the Process’ section above;
- Undertake a thorough needs assessment;²¹
- Identify all relevant legal and policy commitments and assess the financial allocations to implement them;
- Do a detailed costing of the service(s); and
- Identify the relevant institutions to be targeted along with their budgetary processes.
- Mobilize political will to address the issue, and develop good cooperation with key officials.
- Insist on the obligations of authorities under existing international (particularly CEDAW), regional, national and local regulations.

MAP OF SAFE HOUSES IN Bosnia AND HERZEGOVINA

²⁰ For instance, during 2008 and 2009, the Ministry’s allocation did not reach the implementing organization in a timely fashion, which put the shelter operation in jeopardy.

²¹ For examples of how these needs assessments were undertaken in the project, please see: Golubović, Nada and Damjanović, Minja . "Opportunities and Challenges For Introducing Gender Sensitive Budgeting in The Area of Domestic Violence on Local And Entity Level in Bosnia and Herzegovina." United Women, Banja Luka: 2007.



Source: [Center for Investigating Journalism](#)